Lectio Divina

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[1] *Cover Image: Presentation at the Temple by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 1342. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.*

Sunday, February 1, 2026

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection.

Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples from Emmaus, may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us your Spirit. Amen.

Reading

Key for Reading the Text on the Beatitudes:

On this Sunday, the Church invites us to meditate on the eight Beatitudes. Once, seeing the immense crowd who followed him, Jesus went up on the mountain near the Lake of Galilee. Sitting on the top, and looking at the crowds, he made this solemn proclamation: “Blessed are the poor, the afflicted, the humble, those who hunger and thirst for justice, those who struggle in behalf of peace, those who are concerned for the poor, the pure in heart, the persecuted for the cause of justice!” Words of fire which, even today, resound in the world! Throughout two thousand years, they have struck thousands of persons, and they make us think and ask ourselves: “What is happiness? Who is truly happy?”

Some advise: After the reading of the Beatitudes, it is good not to begin immediately to *study and to analyze* the words of Jesus. In the first place, it is good to keep silence in our heart for a moment and believe that we are in the midst of the people gathered together at the foot of the mountain, near the lake, watching Jesus and listening to his words.

A Division of the Text to Help the Reading:

Matthew 5: 1: The solemn proclamation of the new Law

Matthew 5: 2-10: The eight doors which permit one to enter the Kingdom of

God Matthew 5: 11-12: Jesus declares Blessed those who are persecuted

The Text:

1 Seeing the crowds, he went onto the mountain. And when he was seated
his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak. This is what he taught
them: 3 How blessed are the poor in spirit:
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 4 Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the
earth as inheritance. 5 Blessed are those who mourn:
they shall be comforted. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
uprightness: they shall have their fill. 7 Blessed are the merciful: they shall
have mercy shown them. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognized as children of God.
10 Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness:
the
kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 11 'Blessed are you when people abuse you and
persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my
account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is
how they persecuted the prophets before you.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection.

i) Which part of the text struck you the most? Why?

ii) Where, when and for whom does Jesus pronounce this discourse?

iii) Which are the groups of persons whom Jesus declares blessed? Which is the promise for each group?

iv) Do these groups which Jesus speaks about exist today? Who are they and where are they found?

v) How can it be understood that a person can be poor and happy at the same time?

vi) Try to remember two moments in which you truly felt happy in life. Is your opinion of happiness the same as that of Jesus?

vii) What type of happiness do people seek today?

A Key for Reading

For those who wish to deepen into this theme.

Context of the Discourse of Jesus:

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus appears as the new Legislator, the new Moses. Being the Son he knows the Father. He knows what the Father had in mind when, in the past, he gave the Law to the people through Moses. It is because of this that Jesus is able to offer us a new version of God's Law. The solemn announcement of this New Law begins here, in the Sermon on the Mountain. In the Old Testament the Law of Moses is represented in five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Imitating the old model, Matthew presents the New Law in five great discourses distributed throughout his Gospel: the Discourse (Sermon) on the Mountain (Mt 5 to 7), The Discourse on the Missions (Mt 10), the Discourse on the Mystery of the Kingdom present in life (Mt 13), the Discourse on the Community (Mt 18), the Discourse on the future of the Kingdom (Mt 24 and 25). But for Matthew the study of the Law alone is not sufficient. It is necessary to observe well the practice of Jesus, because in it the Spirit of God acts, he is who animates the letter of the Law from within. The description of the practice of Jesus occupies the narrative part intermingled among the five Discourses and has the purpose of showing how Jesus observes the Law and incarnates it in his life.

Commentary on the text:

Matthew 5: 1: *The solemn announcement of the New Law*

In the Old Testament, Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Law from God. Jesus also, the new Moses, goes up on the mountain and looking at the crowd who followed him, proclaims the New Law. Up until this moment, there were only four disciples with Jesus (Mt 4: 18-22). But in fact, an immense crowd followed him. Surrounded by disciples, Jesus begins to teach them, proclaiming the Beatitudes.

Matthew 5: 3-10: *The eight doors to enter into the Kingdom*

The Beatitudes constitute the solemn opening of the Sermon on the Mountain. In it Jesus defines who can enter into the Kingdom. There are eight categories of persons. Eight entrance doors. There is no other door to enter into the Kingdom, in the Community! Those who desire to form part of the Kingdom must identify themselves with one of these categories or groups.

Blessed are the poor in spirit

It is neither the rich nor the poor who has the mentality of the rich. **But it is** the one who like Jesus lives poor (Mt 8: 18), believes the poor (Mt 11: 25-26) and sees in them the first recipients of the Good News (Lk 4: 18). It is the poor who has the Spirit of Jesus!

Blessed are the peacemakers

It is not the passive person who loses the will and no longer reacts. But they are those who have been “pacified” and now, like Mary, live in “humiliation” (Lk 1: 48). They have lost the land that they possessed, but they will regain it (Ps 37: 7, 10-11: 22, 29, 34). Like Jesus, they try to be “meek and humble of heart” (Mt 11, 19).

Blessed are those who mourn

It is not a question of just any kind of sadness, but of a sadness in the face of injustice and the lack of humanity which exists in the world (Tb 13: 16; Ps 119, 136; Ez 9: 4; 2 P 2: 7). They are sad because they do not accept the situation in which humanity is.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice

It is not only a question of the justice sought for in tribunals and which many times is the legalization of injustice. But it is, above all, the Justice of God, which is sought, doing in such a way that things and persons can occupy the place that belongs to them in the plan of the Creator.

Blessed are the merciful

It is not only philanthropy which distributes alms, but it is a question of imitating God who has entrails of mercy for those who suffer (Es 34: 6-7) Mercy means to have the heart in the misery of others to diminish their pain. It means to do in such a way that the suffering of others is not foreign to us.

Blessed arte the pure in heart

It is not a question of legal purity which only sees the exterior, but it is a question of having a purified gaze to accept the Law of God in the heart which becomes transparent, and allows persons to recognize the calls from God in the events of life and of nature.

Blessed are the peacemakers

It is not only the absence of war. The peace which God wants on earth is the total and radical reconstruction of life, of nature and of communal life or living together. It is the Shalôm, the Peace announced by the prophets and given by Jesus to his disciples (Jn 20: 21).

Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of justice

In the world constructed and organized according to the egoism of persons and groups of persons (like the Neo-liberal system which dominates the world today) the one who desires to live the disinterested love will be persecuted and will die on the cross.

The 1st and the 8th categories (the poor and the persecuted in the cause of justice) receive the same promise of the Kingdom of God. and they receive it now, because Jesus says “the Kingdom of Heaven **is** theirs!” Between the 1st and 8th categories, there are other six who receive a promise which will be fulfilled in the future. In these six promises there is a new project. It is the project of the Kingdom, which wants to reconstruct life in its totality: in the relation with the **material goods,** with the **persons,** and with **God.**

The Christian Community, poor and persecuted, is already a sign of the Kingdom! It is its seed!

- The first pair **Meek and those who Mourn**, refers to the relation to material goods. For the future they expect an equitable sharing of the goods of this world among all.
- The second pair **Hunger and Thirst for justice and Merciful,** refers to the relation between persons and community. For the future they expect the fraternal reconstruction of human living together.
- A third pair, **Pure in heart and Peacemakers,** refers to the relation with God: to see God and to be sons of God. For the future they expect the reconstruction of the relation with God.

The Eight Categories /The Eight Promises

The project of the Kingdom

- The poor in spirit

  The Kingdom is theirs

  The seed of the Kingdom

- The meek
- Those who mourn

  Will possess the earth Will be consoled

  Just sharing of goods Eliminates inequality

  Hunger and thirst for justice

- The merciful

  Shall have their fill Will receive mercy

  Reconstructs the fraternal and just relationship

- The pure in heart
- The peacemakers

  Will see God

  Will be sons of God God is present,

  Friendly and faithful Presence

- Persecuted in the cause of justice

  The Kingdom is theirs The seed is crucified

- Matthew 5: 11-12: Jesus declares that the persecuted are blessed

He pronounces a word of consolation to the persecuted. At the time of Matthew, around the years 80's after Christ, this project of reconstruction of life and of living together or community living was about to be assumed by the Christian community, all of them poor and without the sense of expression. This is why they are persecuted. This last word of Jesus confirms the community in the resistance out of love for the Gospel.

Broadening Our Vision on the Beatitudes

- The community which receives the Beatitudes

  Matthew mentions eight Beatitudes. Luke only has four and four curses (Lk 6: 20-26). The four mentioned by Luke are: "You who are poor, you who are hungry, you who weep, you who are hated and persecuted" (Lk 6: 20-23). Luke writes for the community of converted pagans. They live in the hostile context of the Roman Empire.

  Matthew writes for the community of converted Jews, who live in the context of breaking away from the Synagogue. Before breaking away, they enjoyed a certain social acceptance. But now, after the breaking away, the community entered in crisis and in it they began to appear different tendencies and struggles among them. Some belonging to the line of Pharisees wanted to maintain the same rigor in the observance of the Law, to which they were accustomed before their conversion to Jesus. But in doing this, they excluded the little ones and the poor. The new Law introduced by Jesus asks that all be accepted in the community as brothers and sisters. For this, the solemn beginning of the New Law presents eight Beatitudes which define the categories of persons who should be accepted in the community: the poor, the meek, those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted.

- The poor in spirit?

  Jesus recognizes richness and the value of the poor (Mt 11: 25-26). His mission was "to announce the Good News to the poor" (Lk 4, 18). He himself lived as a poor person. He possessed nothing himself, he had nowhere to lay his head (Mt 8: 18). And to those who want to follow Jesus he asks that they choose between God and money (Mt 6: 24). *Poor in spirit* is the person who before the poor has the spirit of Jesus.

  Every time that in the story of the People of God they seek to renew the Covenant, it is begun by re-establishing the rights of the poor and of the excluded. Without this, it is not possible to renew the Covenant! This is what the prophets did, this is what Jesus does. He denounces the system which excludes the poor and those who are persecuted, those who fight for justice. In the name of God, Jesus announces a new Project which accepts the excluded. The community around Jesus has to be an example where this future Kingdom begins to be shaped. It should be characterized by a new type of relation to material goods, to persons and to God himself. It should be the seed of a new nation! Behold, a very important task for us Christians,

especially for the young. Because this is the only way to merit credibility and to give a very concrete example of the Kingdom, an alternative of life which is really Good News of God for the poor and the excluded.

- Be blessed, happy today

  The Gospel says exactly the contrary to that which the civil society in which we live affirms. In society the poor is considered an unhappy person, and happy the one who possess money and is able to spend as he wills. In our society, happy is the one who has fame and power. The unhappy ones are the poor, those who mourn and weep! On Television, the romances, shown in episodes diffuse the myth of the happy and fulfilled persons, and without being aware, the romances shown in episodes become the examples of life for many of us. These words of Jesus still keep their sense in our society: "Blessed are the poor! Blessed are those who mourn!" And for me, being a Christian, who in fact is Blessed?

Prayer: Psalm 117

God deserves to be praised.
Alleluia! Praise Yahweh, all nations, extol him, all peoples, for his faithful love is strong and his constancy never-ending.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Monday, February 2, 2026

The Presentation of the Lord

Opening Prayer

O God, our Creator and Father, You willed that Your Son, generated before the dawn of the world, should become a member of the human family. Rekindle in us an appreciation for the gift of life, so that parents may participate in the fruitfulness of Your love, old people may pass on to young ones their mature wisdom, and children may grow in wisdom, piety and grace, all giving praise to Your holy name. Through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading: Luke 2: 22-40

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph took Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord,

just as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord, and to offer the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.
Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying:
"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."
The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted Band you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."
There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.
When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

- that the Word of God may dwell in us and that we may allow it to enlighten our lives;
- that before we share any comments, the very light of the Word may shine and dominate with the mystery of the living presence of the Lord.

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection.

- Why should Jesus, Son of the Most High, and His mother Mary, conceived without sin, obey the prescriptions of Moses? Was Mary perhaps not yet aware of her innocence and holiness?
- Is there special significance in the words and attitudes of Simeon and the prophetess Anna? Do not their actions and joy perhaps recall the style of the ancient prophets?

- How can we explain this "sword" that pierces? Is it a rending of consciences before the challenges and richness of Jesus? Or is it only the inner pains of the Mother?
- Can this scene mean anything to parents today: for the religious formation of their children; for the plan that God has for each of their children; for the fears and sufferings that parents carry in their hearts when they think of the time when their children grow up?

A Key to the Reading

for those who wish go deeper into the text.

- As laid down in the law of Moses/of the Lord. This is a kind of refrain repeated several times. Luke mixes two prescriptions without making any distinction. The purification of the mother was foreseen in Leviticus (12: 2-8) and was to take place forty days after the birth. Until then, the woman could not approach sacred places, and the ceremony was accompanied by the gift of a small animal. But the consecration of the first-born was prescribed in Exodus (13: 11-16) and was considered a kind of "ransom" in memory of the saving action of God when He liberated the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. For this also the offering was a small animal. Throughout this scene, the parents seem to be in the process of presenting/offering their son as was done with sacrifices and Levites, while through the persons of Simeon and Anna it seems rather God who offers/presents the son for the salvation of people.
- Simeon and Anna: these are figures full of symbolic value. Their role is one of recognition, that comes from both the enlightenment and action of the Spirit and a life lived in expectation and faith. Simeon especially is defined as *prodek menos*, that is, one entirely absorbed in waiting, and one who goes forward to welcome. He, too, appears to be obedient to the law, the law of the Spirit, who leads him towards the child in the temple. The canticle he proclaims manifests his pro-existentia: he has lived in order to come to this moment, and now he withdraws so that others may see the light and the salvation to come for Israel and the gentiles. Anna completes the picture, by her very age (symbolic value: 84 equals 7x12, the twelve tribes of Israel; or 84 7 = 77, double perfection), but above all by her way of living (fasting and praying) and by her proclamation to all who "looked forward". She is led by the Spirit of prophecy, docile and purified in her heart. Besides, she belongs to the smallest of the tribes, that of Asher, a sign that the small and fragile are the ones more disposed to recognize Jesus, the Savior. Both of these old people, who look like an original couple, are symbols of the best of Judaism, of faithful and meek Jerusalem, that awaits and rejoices and that from now on allows the new light to shine.
- A sword will pierce: generally, these words are interpreted as meaning that Mary will suffer, a drama made visible in Our Lady of Sorrows. Rather, we need to see the Mother as a symbol of Israel. Simeon feels the drama of his people

who will be deeply torn by the living and sharp word of the redeemer (cf. Lk 12: 51-53). Mary represents the path: she must trust, but will go through times of pain and darkness, struggles and painful silences. The story of the suffering Messiah will be painful for all, even for the Mother. One does not follow the new light of the whole world without paying the cost, without being provoked to make risky choices, without being always born again from on high and in newness. But these images of the "sword that pierces," of the child who will "trip" and shake hearts from their lethargy, are not to be separated from the meaningful action of the two old people: the one, Simeon, takes the child in his arms to show that faith is a meeting and an embrace, not an idea or theorem; the other, Anna, takes on the role of proclaiming and en-kindles a bright light in the hearts of all who "looked forward" to Him.

- Daily life, an epiphany of God. Finally, it is interesting to note that the whole episode emphasizes the situation of the most simple and homely: the young couple with the child in their arms; the old man who rejoices and embraces, the old woman who prays and proclaims, those listening who appear to be indirectly involved. At the end of the passage, we also get a glimpse of the village of Nazareth, of the growth of the child in a normal context, the impression of a child extraordinarily gifted with wisdom and goodness. The theme of wisdom, woven into the fabric of normal life and growth in a village context, leaves the story as if in suspense, and it will be taken up again precisely with the theme of the wisdom of the boy among the doctors in the temple. Indeed, this is the episode that follows immediately (Lk 2:41-52).

Psalm 122

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"
Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem, built as a city which is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! "May they prosper who love you! Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers!"
For my brethren and companions' sake I will say, "Peace be within you!"
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.

Final Prayer

Father, we praise You and we bless You because through Your Son, born of woman by the working of the Holy Spirit, born under the law, has ransomed us from the law and You have filled our life with light and new hope. May our families welcome and remain faithful to Your designs; may they help and sustain in their children the new dreams and enthusiasm, wrap them in tenderness when they are fragile, educate them in love for You and for all creatures. All honor and glory to You, Father. Amen.

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord our God, help us to love You with all our hearts and to love all people as You love them.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 5: 21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea. One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she mayget well and live." He went off with him and a large crowd followed him. There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd andasked, "Who has touched my clothes?" But his disciples said to him, "You see how thecrowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, Who touched me?" And he looked aroundto see who had done it. The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached infear and trembling. She fell before Jesus and told him the whole truth. He said toher, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?"
Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid; justhave faith." He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. So he went in and said to them, "Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep." And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out. He took along the child's father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was. He took the child by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum*," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. At that they were utterly astounded. He gave strict orders that no one should know this andsaid that she should be given something to eat.

Reflection

In today's Gospel, we meditate on two miracles which Jesus worked in favor of two women: the first one for a woman who was considered impure because of the hemorrhage which she was suffering from for the past 12 years; the other one for a twelve-year-old girl, who had died a short time before. According to the mentality of the time, anybody who would touch blood or a corpse was considered impure. Blood and death were factors for exclusion! Because of this, those two women were marginalized people and excluded from participation in the community.

- *The starting point. Jesus arrives in the boat.* The people join Him. Jairus, the head ofthe synagogue, asks help for his daughter, who is dying. Jesus goes with him and the people accompany Him, pushing on all sides. This is the starting point of the two casesof healing which follow: the cure of the woman and the resurrection of the twelve-year-old girl.
- *The situation of the woman.* Twelve years of suffering from hemorrhage! For this reason, she lived excluded, because at that time blood rendered people impure, and the one who touched them became impure also. Mark says that the woman had spent all shehad with doctors. And instead of becoming better, she got worse. A situation without a solution!
- *The attitude of the woman.* She heard people speak about Jesus. Hope sprang up in her. She told herself, "If I can just touch His clothes, I will be saved". The catechism ofthe time said, "If I touch His cloak, He will become impure". The woman thinks exactlythe contrary! This is a sign that women did not agree with all that religious authority taught. The woman gets in through the crowd, in the midst of the people, and without being noticed, she touches Jesus, because everybody was touching Him and pushing Him. At that same moment she noticed in her body that she had been cured.
- *The reaction of Jesus and that of the disciples.* Jesus, aware of the power that had goneout from Him, asked, "*Who touched My clothes?"* The disciples said to Him, "You see how the crowd is pressing round You; how can You ask, 'Who touched Me?'" So now comes the clash between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus had a sensitivity which the disciples did not perceive. The disciples reacted like everybody else; they did not understand the different reaction of Jesus. But Jesus did not pay attention and continued to investigate.
- *Healing through faith.* The woman became aware that she had been discovered. It was a difficult and dangerous moment for her, because according to the belief of the time, an impure person like herself got in among the people and contaminated everyone who touched her. All would become impure before God (Lev 15: 19-30). For this reason, the punishment could be stoning. But the woman had the courage to accept the consequences of what she had done. The woman *"frightened and trembling"* fell at Jesus' feet and told Him the whole truth. Jesus has the last word: *"My daughter, your faith has restored you to health, go in peace and be free of your complaint."*
    - (a) "Daughter", with this word Jesus accepts the woman into the new family, into the community which was gathering together around Him.

- (b) What she thought through faith became a reality.
- (c) Jesus acknowledges that, without that woman's faith, He would not have been able to work the miracle.

- *The news of the death of the little girl.* At that moment some people arrived from the house of Jairus to inform him that his daughter had died. It was no longer necessary to disturb Jesus. For them, death was the great barrier. Jesus will not be able to overcome death! Jesus listens, looks at Jairus, and applies what He had just seen, that faith can realize what the person believes. And He says, *"Do not be afraid, only have faith!"*
- *In Jairus' house*. Jesus allows only three of His disciples to go with Him. Seeing the commotion of the people weeping and wailing because of the death of the child, He said, "The child is not dead; she sleeps!" The people laughed. They know how to distinguish between a person who is sleeping and when the person is dead. It is the same laughter of Abraham and of Sarah, of those who are unable to believe that nothing is impossible for God (Gn 17: 17; 18: 12-14; Lk 1: 37). For them, death was a barrier which nobody could overcome or go beyond! The words of Jesus had a very profound meaning. The situation of the persecuted communities at the time of Mark seemed to be a situation of death. They needed to hear, "She is not dead! You are sleeping! Wake up!" Jesus does not pay attention to the laughter and enters the room where the child is, alone, and with the three disciples and the parents of the child.
- *The resurrection of the child*. Jesus takes the child by the hand and says: "*Talitha kum*!" She rises. There is a great commotion! Jesus keeps calm and asks that they giveher something to eat. Two women are cured! One is twelve years old, the other one twelve years of hemorrhage, twelve years of exclusion! The exclusion of the child begins at twelve years of age, because her menstruation begins; she begins to die! Jesus has the greatest power and resurrects: "Get up!"

Personal Questions

- What is the point in this text which pleased you or struck you the most? Why?
- One of the women was cured and once again integrated so that she could live in the community. A child was raised from her death bed. What does this action of Jesus teach us for our life in the family and for our community today?

Concluding Prayer

From You comes my praise in the thronged assembly;I will perform my vows before all who fear Him.
The poor will eat and be filled; those who seek Yahweh will praise Him. May your heart live forever. (Ps 22: 25-26)

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

. *Ordinary Time*

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
help us to love You with all our hearts and to love all people as You love them.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 6: 1-6

Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house.” So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Reflection

The Gospel today speaks of the visit of Jesus to Nazareth and describes the obstinacy of the people of Nazareth who do not want to accept Him. (Mk 6: 1-6). Tomorrow the Gospel describes the openness of Jesus toward the people of Galilee, shown through the sending out of His disciples on mission (Mk 6: 7-13).

- Mark 6: 1-2a: Jesus returns to Nazareth. At that time Jesus went to His hometown, and His disciples accompanied Him. “With the coming of the Sabbath, He began teaching in the synagogue.” It is always good to return to one’s hometown and to reunite with friends. After a long absence, Jesus also returns, and as usual, on Saturday, He goes to the synagogue to participate in the meeting of the community. Jesus was not the coordinator of the community, but even though He was not, He takes the floor and begins to teach. This is a sign that people could participate and express their own opinion.
- Mark 6: 2b-3: Reaction of the people of Nazareth before Jesus. The people of Capernaum had accepted the teaching of Jesus (Mk 1: 22), but the people of Nazareth did not like the words of Jesus and were scandalized. For what reason? Jesus, the boy whom they had known since He was born, how is it that now He is so different? They do not accept God’s mystery present in Jesus, a human being and common as they are and known by all! They think that to be able to speak of God, He should be different from them! As we can

see, not everything went well for Jesus. The people who should have been the first ones to accept the Good News were precisely those who had the greatest difficulty accepting it. The conflict was not only with foreigners, but especially with His relatives and with the people of Nazareth. They refused to believe in Jesus, because they could not understand the mystery of God embracing the person of Jesus. "From where do all these things come to Him? And what wisdom is this which has been given to Him? And these miracles which are worked by Him? This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and Jude and Simon? His sisters too, are they not here with us?" And they would not accept Him. They do not believe in Jesus!

- The brothers and the sisters of Jesus. The expression "brothers of Jesus" causes polemics among Catholics and Protestants. Based on this text and on others, the Protestants say that Jesus had more brothers and sisters and that Mary had more sons! The Catholics say that Mary had no other sons. What should we think about all this? In the first place, the two positions, that of Catholics and that of the Protestants, both have arguments taken from the Bible and from the tradition of their respective communities. Therefore, it is not proper to discuss this question with arguments drawn only from reason. This is a question of profound convictions, which have something to do with the faith sentiments both of Catholics and Protestants. An argument taken only from reason cannot succeed in changing the conviction of the heart! On the contrary, it irritates and draws others away! Even when I do not agree with the opinion of another, I should always respect it! We, both Catholics and Protestants, instead of discussing texts, should unite to struggle in defense of life, created by God, a life which has been so disfigured by poverty and injustice, by the lack of faith. We should remember other phrases of Jesus: "I have come in order that they may have life and life in abundance" (Jn 10: 10). "That all may be one, so that the world may believe that You, Father, have sent Me" (Jn 17: 21). "Who is not against us is for us" (Mk 10: 39-40).
- Mark 6: 4-6. Jesus' reaction before the attitude of the people of Nazareth. Jesus knows very well that "nobody is a prophet in his own country." He says, "A prophet is despised only in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house." In fact, where there is no acceptance or faith, people can do nothing. The preconception prevents this. Even if Jesus wanted to do something, He cannot, and He is amazed at their lack of faith. For this reason, before the closed door of His community "He began to make a tour around the villages, teaching." The experience of this rejection led Jesus to change His practice. He goes to the other villages and, as we shall see in tomorrow's Gospel, He gets the disciples involved in the mission instructing them on how they have to continue the mission.

Personal Questions

- Jesus had problems with His relatives and with His community. From the time when you began to live the Gospel better, has something changed in your relationship with your family and with your relatives?

- Jesus cannot work many miracles in Nazareth because faith is lacking. Today, does He find faith in us, in me?
- Does the debate over Mary and Jesus' brothers and sisters precipitate a change in our behavior or how we put faith into action? Should this change how we treat the poor and marginalized?

Concluding Prayer

How blessed are those whose offense is forgiven, whose sin blotted out.
How blessed are those to whom Yahweh imputes no guilt, whose spirit harbors no deceit. (Ps 32: 1-2)

Thursday, February 5, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer:

Lord our God,
help us to love You with all our hearts and to love all people as You love them.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 6: 7-13

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick - no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Reflection

- Today's Gospel continues what we have already seen in the Gospel yesterday. The passage through Nazareth was painful for Jesus. He was rejected by His own people (Mk 6: 1-5). The community, which had been His community, is no longer such. Something has changed. Beginning at that moment, as today's Gospel says, Jesus began to go around to the villages of Galilee to announce the Good News (Mk 6: 6) and to send the Twelve on a mission. In the 70's, the time when Mark wrote his Gospel, the Christian communities lived in a difficult situation, without any horizon. Humanly speaking, there was no future for them. In the year 64, Nero began to persecute the Christians. In the

year 65, the revolt or uprising of the Jews in Palestine against Rome broke out. In the year 70, Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the Romans. This is why the description of the sending out of the disciples, after the conflict in Nazareth, was a source of light and of courage for the Christians.

- Mark 6: 7. The objective of the Mission. The conflict grew and closely affected Jesus. How does He react? In two ways:
    - 1) In the face of the mental stubbornness of the people of His community, Jesus leaves Nazareth and begins to go to the neighboring villages (Mk 6: 6).
    - 2) He extends the mission and intensifies the announcement of the Good News, calling other people to involve them in the mission.

  He summons the Twelve, and begins to send them out in pairs, giving them authority over unclean spirits. The objective of the mission is simple and profound. The disciples participate in the mission of Jesus. They cannot go alone; they have to go in pairs, two by two, because two persons represent the community better than one alone and they can mutually help one another. They receive authority over unclean spirits, i.e., they are to be a help for others in suffering and, through purification, they are to open the door for direct access to God.

- Mark 6: 8-11 – The attitudes which they should have in the Mission. The recommendations are simple: He instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff: no bread, no bag, no money for their purses; they were to wear sandals and not to take a spare tunic. And He told them, “If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away, shake off the dust under your feet, as evidence to them.” So they set off. It is the beginning of a new stage. Now not only Jesus but the whole group will announce the Good News of God to the people. If the preaching of Jesus caused conflict, much more now, there will be conflict with the preaching of the whole group. If the mystery was already great, now it will be greater since the mission has been intensified.
- Mark 6: 12-13 – The result of the mission. So they set off to proclaim repentance, and they cast out many devils and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them. The proclamation of the Good News produces conversion or a change in people; it alleviates suffering in people; it cures illnesses and casts out devils.

  The sending out of the disciples on Mission. At the time of Jesus there were several other movements of renewal, for example, the Essenes and the Pharisees. They also sought a new way of living in community and they had their own missionaries (cf. Mt 23: 15). But these, when they went on mission, had prejudices. They took with them a bag and money to take care of their own meals, because they did not trust the food that people would give them, which was not always ritually pure. As opposed to other missionaries, the disciples of Jesus received various recommendations which helped them to

understand the fundamental points of the mission which they received from Jesus and which is also our mission:

- They should go without taking anything. They should take nothing, no bag, no money, no staff, no bread, no sandals, no spare tunic. That meant that Jesus obliged them to trust in hospitality, because one who goes without taking anything goes because he trusts people and thinks that he will be well received. With this attitude they criticized the laws of exclusion, taught by the official religion, and showed, by means of the new practice, that they in the community had other criteria.
- They should eat what people ate or what the people gave them. They could not live separately, providing their own food, but they were to accept to sit at the same table (Lk 10: 8). This means that in contact with the people, they should not be afraid of losing purity as it was taught at that time. With this attitude they criticized the laws of purity which were in force and showed, by means of the new practice, that they had another type of access to purity, that is, intimacy with God.
- They should remain in the first house that welcomed them. They should live together in a stable way and not go from house to house. They should work like everybody else and live off what they received in exchange, because the laborer deserves his wages (Lk 10: 7). In other words, they should participate in the life and in the work of the people, and the people would have accepted them in the community and would have shared the food with them. This means that they had to have trust in sharing.
- They should take care of the sick, cure lepers and cast out devils (Lk 10: 9; Mk 6: 7- 13; Mt 10: 8). They had to carry out the function of Defender ("*go'el*") and accept within the community those who were excluded. With this attitude they criticized the situation of disintegration of the community life of the clan and they aimed at concrete ways of correcting this. These were the four fundamental points which had to give impetus to the attitude of the missionaries who announced the Good News in the name of Jesus: hospitality, communion, sharing and acceptance of the excluded (defender, "*go'el*"). If these four requirements were respected, they could and should cry out to the four ends of the earth: The Kingdom of God has come! (cf. Lk 10: 1-12; 9: 1-6; Mk 6: 7-13; Mt 10: 6-16). The Kingdom of God revealed by Jesus is not a doctrine, nor a catechism, nor a law. The Kingdom of God comes and becomes present when people, motivated by their faith in Jesus, decide to live in community to give witness and to manifest to all that God is Father and Mother and that, therefore, we human beings are brothers and sisters to one another. Jesus wanted the local community to be an expression of the Covenant, of the Kingdom, of the love of God the Father, who makes all of us brothers and sisters.

Personal Questions:

- Do you participate in the mission as a disciple of Jesus?
- Which point of the mission of the apostles is more important for us today? Why?

Concluding Prayer

Great is Yahweh and most worthy of praise in the city of our God, the holy mountain, towering in beauty, the joy of the whole world. (Ps 48: 1-2)

Friday, February 6, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
help us to love you with all our hearts and to love all men as you love them.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 6: 14-29

King Herod had heard about him, since by now his name was well known. Some were saying, 'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.' Others said, 'He is Elijah,' others again, 'He is a prophet, like the prophets we used to have.' But when Herod heard this, he said, 'It is John whose head I cut off; he has risen from the dead.'
Now it was this same Herod who had sent to have John arrested and had had him chained up in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife whom he had married. For John had told Herod, 'It is against the law for you to have your brother's wife.'
As for Herodias, she was furious with him and wanted to kill him, but she was not able to do so, because Herod was in awe of John, knowing him to be a good and upright man, and gave him his protection. When he had heard him speak, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he liked to listen to him.
An opportunity came on Herod's birthday when he gave a banquet for the nobles of his court, for his army officers and for the leading figures in Galilee. When the daughter of this same Herodias came in and danced, she delighted Herod and his guests; so the king said to the girl, 'Ask me anything you like and I will give it you.' And he swore her an oath, 'I will give you anything you ask, even half my kingdom.'
She went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the Baptist.' The girl at once rushed back to the king and made her request, 'I want you to give me John the Baptist's head, immediately, on a dish.'

The king was deeply distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he was reluctant to break his word to her. At once the king sent one of the bodyguards with orders to bring John's head.
The man went off and beheaded him in the prison; then he brought the head on a dish and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.
When John's disciples heard about this, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Reflection

The Gospel today describes how John the Baptist was victim of the corruption and of the arrogance of the Government of Herod. He died without being judged by a tribunal, in the course of a banquet given by Herod with the great men of the kingdom. The text gives much information about the time of the life of Jesus and on the way in which the powerful of the time exercised power. From the beginning of the Gospel of Mark we perceive or see a situation of suspense. He had said: “After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God!” (Mk 1: 14). In today’s Gospel, almost suddenly, we know that Herod had already killed John the Baptist. Therefore, the reader asks himself: “What will he do now with Jesus? Will he suffer the same destiny? Rather than drawing up a balance of the opinions of the people and of Herod on Jesus, Mark asks another question: “Who is Jesus?” This last question grows throughout the Gospel until it receives the definitive response from the centurion at the foot of the Cross: “Truly, this man was the Son of God!” (Mk 15: 39)

- Mark 6: 14-16. Who is Jesus? The text begins with a balance on the opinions of the people and of Herod on Jesus. Some associated Jesus to John the Baptist and to Elijah. Others identified him with a Prophet, that is, with someone who spoke in the name of God, who had the courage to denounce the injustices of the powerful and who knew how to animate the hope of the little ones. Persons tried to understand Jesus starting from the things that they themselves knew, believed, and hoped. They tried to make him fit into familiar criteria of the Old Testament with its prophecies and its hopes, and of the Tradition of the Ancient, with their laws. But these criteria were not sufficient. Jesus could not fit in those criteria. He was much greater!
- Mark 6: 17-20. The cause for the killing of John. Galilee, the land of Jesus, was governed by Herod Antipas, the son of King Herod, the Great, from the year 4 BC up to the year 39 after Christ. In all, 43 years! During the whole lifetime of Jesus, there had been no changes in the government of Galilee! Herod Antipas was the absolute Lord of everything; he listened to no one and did whatever he pleased! But the one, who really commanded in Palestine, from the year 63 BC, was the Roman Empire. Herod, in order not to be removed from office, tried to please Rome in everything. He insisted above all, in an efficient administration which would provide income for the Roman Empire. The only thing that concerned or worried him was his security and promotion. This is why he repressed any type of subversion. Falvio Giuseppe, a writer of that time, says that the reason for the

imprisonment of John the Baptist was the fear that Herod had of a popular revolt. Herod liked to be called benefactor of the people, but in reality he was a tyrant (Lk 22: 25). The denouncement of John against him (Mk 6: 18), was the drop which filled up the cup, and John was thrown into prison.

- Mark 6: 21-29: The plot of the murdering. The anniversary and the banquet of the feast, with dancing and orgies! This was an environment in which the alliances were plotted. To the feast attended and were present "the great of the court, the officials and important persons from Galilee." In this environment the murdering of John the Baptist was plotted. John, the prophet, was a living denouncement in this corrupt system. This is why he was eliminated under the pretext of a problem of personal vengeance. All this reveals the moral weakness of Herod. So much power accumulated in the hands of a man who did not control himself!

  Under the enthusiasm of the feast and of the wine, Herod swore lightly to give something to the young dancer. And superstitious as he was, he thought that he had to maintain his oath. For Herod, the life of his subjects counted nothing had no value. He used them as he wanted and decided what to do with them just as he decided where to place the chairs in his house. Mark gives an account of how things happened and lets the community draw the conclusions.

Personal Questions

- Do you know the case of persons who have died victims of corruption and of the dominion of the powerful? And do you know persons in our community and in our Church victims of authoritarianism and of an excess of power?
- Herod, the powerful who thought to be the owner of life and death of the people, was a great superstitious person, and feared John the Baptist. He was a coward before the great, a corrupt man before the girl. Superstition, cowardice, and corruption distinguished the exercise of the power of Herod. Compare this with the religious and civil power today in the various levels of society and of the Church.

Concluding Prayer

This God, his way is blameless;
the word of Yahweh is refined in the furnace,
for he alone is the shield of all who take refuge in him. (Ps 18: 30)

Saturday, February 7, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord our God, help us to love You with all our hearts and to love all people as You love them.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel reading - Mark 6: 30-34

The Apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them. When Jesus disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Reflection

The Gospel today is in great contrast with that of yesterday. On one side, the banquet of death, wanted by Herod with the great of his kingdom in the Palace of the Capital, during which John the Baptist was murdered (Mk 6: 17-29); on the other side, the banquet of life promoted by Jesus with the hungry people of Galilee in the desert (Mk 6: 30-44).The Gospel today presents only the introduction to the multiplication of the loaves and describes the teaching of Jesus.

- Mark 6: 30-32. The welcome given to the disciples. At that time, the apostles rejoined Jesus and told Him all they had done and taught. And He said to them, “Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while.” These verses show how Jesus formed His disciples. He was not concerned only with the content of the preaching, but also with rest for the disciples. He invited them to go to a lonely place so as to be able to rest and review what they had done.
- Mark 6: 33-34. The welcome given to the people. The people noticed that Jesus had gone to the other side of the lake, and they followed Him trying to go to Him by foot, to the other shore. So, as He stepped ashore He saw a large crowd, and He took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and He began to teach them at some length. Seeing that crowd, Jesus was sad, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He forgets about His own rest and begins to teach them. In becoming aware that the people have no shepherd, Jesus began to be their shepherd. He begins to teach them.

  As the psalm says, “The Lord is my Shepherd! I lack nothing. In grassy meadows He lets me lie. By tranquil streams He leads me to restore my spirit. He guides me in paths of saving justice as befits His name. Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death I should fear no danger,

> for You are at my side. Your staff and Your crook are there to soothe me. You prepare a table for me in the sight of my enemies." (Ps 23 1: 3-5). Jesus wanted to rest together with His disciples, but the desire to respond to the needs of the people impels Him to leave rest aside. Something similar happens when He meets the Samaritan woman. The disciples went to get some food. When they returned, they said to Jesus, "Master, eat something!" (Jn 4: 31), but He answers, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." (Jn 4: 32). The desire to respond to the needs of the Samaritan people leads Him to forget His hunger. My food is to do the will of the One who sent Me and to complete His work (Jn 4: 34). The first thing is to respond to the people who look for Him. Then He can eat.

Then Jesus began to teach them many things. The Gospel of Mark tells us many things that Jesus taught. The people were impressed: A new teaching! He taught them with authority! It was unlike that of the scribes! (Mk 1: 22, 27). Teaching was what Jesus did the most (Mk 2: 13; 4: 1-2; 6: 34). This is what He usually did (Mk 10: 1). For another fifteen times Mark says that Jesus taught. Was it perhaps because Mark was not interested in the content? It depends on what people understand when they speak about content! To teach is not only a question of teaching new truths in order to say something. The content which Jesus gave did not only appear in His words, but also in His gestures and in His way of relating with people. The content is never separated from the person who communicates it. Jesus was a welcoming person (Mk 6: 34). He wanted the good of the people. The goodness and the love which came from His words formed part of the content. They were His temperament. A good content without goodness and kindness would be like milk poured on the floor. Jesus' teaching manifested itself in a thousand ways. Jesus accepts as disciples not only men, but also women. He does not only teach in the synagogue, but also in any place where there were people to listen to Him: in the synagogue, in the house, on the shore, on the mountain, on the plain, in the boat, in the desert. It was not the relationship of pupil-teacher, but of disciple to Master.
The professor teaches and the pupil is with him during the time of the class. The Master gives witness and the disciple lives with Him 24 hours a day. It is more difficult to be a Master than a teacher! We are not pupils of Jesus, we are His disciples! The teaching of Jesus was a communication that came from the abundance of His heart in the most varied forms: like a conversation by which He tries to clarify the facts (Mk 9: 9-13), like a comparison or parable that invites people to think and to participate (Mk 4: 33), like an explanation of what He Himself thought and did (Mk 7: 17-23), like a discussion which does not necessarily avoid polemics (Mk 2: 6-12), like a criticism that denounces what is false and mistaken (Mk 12: 38-40). It was always a witness of what He Himself lived, an expression of His love! (Mt 11: 28-30).

Personal Questions

- What do you do when you want to teach others something about your faith and your religion?

- Do you imitate Jesus? Jesus is concerned not only about the content, but also about rest. How was the religious education that you received as a child?
- Did the catechists imitate Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

How can a young man keep his way spotless? By keeping your words.
With all my heart I seek You; do not let me stray from Your commandments. (Ps 119: 9-10)

Sunday, February 8, 2026

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that You read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of Your sentence and death.
Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection.
Create silence in us so that we may listen to Your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May Your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, may experience the force of Your resurrection and witness to others that You are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of You, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed the Father to us and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mt 5: 13-16

Key for the Reading of Both Parables:

If you have a chance, read Matthew 5: 1-12, which meditated on the eight Beatitudes. The Beatitudes constitute the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount and describe the eight doors of entry into the Kingdom of God, by a life in community (Mt 5: 1-12). This Sunday we meditate the continuation (Mt 5: 13-16) which presents two well-known parables, of the light and of the salt, with which Jesus describes the mission of the community. The community has to be salt of the earth and light of the world. Salt does not exist for itself, but to give flavor to food. Light does not exist in itself, but to illuminate the road. We, our community, do not exist for ourselves, but for others and for God.
Almost always when Jesus wants to communicate an important message, He has recourse to a parable or to a comparison, taken from daily life. In general, He does not explain the parable, because it is a question of things that we all know from experience. A parable is a provocation. Jesus provokes the audience to use its own personal experience to understand the message which He wants to

communicate. In the case of the Gospel of this Sunday, Jesus wants that each one of us analyze the experience that he or she has of salt and light to understand the mission that is ours as Christians. In this world, is there someone, perhaps, who does not know what salt is or what light is? Jesus begins with two very common and universal things to communicate his message.

A Division of the Text to Help in the Reading:

- Matthew 5: 13: The Parable of the salt
- Matthew 5: 14-15: The Parable of the light
- Matthew 5: 16: Application of the parable of the light.

The Text:

13 “You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet. 14 You are light for the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lampstand where it shines for everyone in the house. 16 In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.”

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection

- Which part of the text struck you most? Why?
- In the first place, before trying to understand the meaning of Jesus’ words about the salt, try to reflect within yourself on the experience that you have of the salt in your life and try to discover this: “According to me, salt, for what is it good?”
- Starting then from this personal experience concerning the salt, try to discover the meaning of Jesus’ words for your life and for the life of the community, of the Church. Am I being salt? Is our community being salt? Is the Church being salt?
- What meaning does light have in your life? What has been your experience concerning light?
- What is the meaning of the parable of the light starting from the application which Jesus Himself makes in the parable?

To Deepen More on This Theme

Context of the Discourse of Jesus:

- Literary context. The four verses of the Gospel of this Sunday (Mt 5: 13-16) are found among the eight Beatitudes (Mt 5: 1-12) and the explanation of how the Law transmitted by Moses is to be understood (Mt 5: 17-19). Then follows the new reading which Jesus makes of the commandments of the Law of God (Mt 5: 20-48). Jesus asks us to consider the purpose of the Law which according to Him is contained in the words: "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5: 48). Jesus asks us to imitate God! At the origin of this new teaching of Jesus is found the new experience which He has of God the Father. Observing the Law in this way, we will be salt of the earth and light of the world.
- Historical Context. Many converted Jews continued to be faithful in the observance of the Law, just as they had done during their childhood. But now, having accepted Jesus as the Messiah, and, at the same time, being faithful to the teaching received from their parents and the Rabbi, they were cutting themselves out from their Hebrew past, they were expelled from the synagogues, from the ancient teachers and even from their parents (Mt 10: 21-22). And in their own Christian community, they heard the converted pagans say that the Law of Moses had been surpassed and that it was not necessary to observe it. They were between two fires. On one side, the ancient teachers and companions excommunicated them. On the other side, the new companions criticized them. All this caused tension and uncertainty in them. The openness of some criticized the closeness of others and vice-versa. This conflict brought about a crisis which led them to close up in their own position. Some wanted to go ahead, others wanted to place the light under the table. And many asked themselves: "But definitively, what is our mission?" The parables of the salt and the light help us to reflect on the mission.

Commentary on the Text:

- Matthew 5: 13: The parable of the salt

  Using images of daily life, with simple and direct words, Jesus makes known what is the mission and the reason for being of the Community: to be salt! In that time, because of the great heat, people and animals needed to eat much salt. The salt was delivered in great blocks by the suppliers and these blocks were placed in the public square to be consumed by the people. The salt which remained fell on the ground, was no longer good for anything and it was stepped on by everyone. Jesus recalls this usage to clarify the mission which the disciples have to carry out. Without salt nobody could live, but what remained of the salt was good for nothing.

- Matthew 5: 14-16: The Parable of the Light

  The comparison is obvious. Nobody lights a candle to place it under a bushel.

A city on a mountain top cannot remain hidden. The community must be light, has to illuminate. It must not be afraid to show the good that it does. It does not do it to make it seen, but what it does can and should be seen. Salt does not exist for itself. Light does not exist for itself. This is the way a community should be: it cannot close itself in self.

To Broaden the Vision on the Beatitudes:

- The parables in the context of the community of that time
- Among the converted Jews there were two tendencies. Some thought that it was no longer necessary to observe the Laws of the Old Testament, because we have been saved by faith in Jesus and not by the observance of the Law (Rom 3: 21-26). Others thought that they, being Jews, had to continue to observe the laws of the Old Testament (Acts 15: 1-2). In each one of these two tendencies there were some more radical groups. Before this conflict, Matthew seeks a balance to unite both extremes. The community has to be a space where this balance can be reached and where it can be lived. The community has to be the center of irradiation of this lived experience and show everyone the true meaning and the objective of the Law of God. The communities cannot go against the Law, nor can they close themselves up in themselves in the observance of the Law. Like Jesus, they have to take a step ahead and show in practice the objective which the Law wants to attain, that is, the perfect practice of love. Living in this way they will be "Salt of the Earth and Light of the World."

The various tendencies in the communities of the first Christians

- The Pharisees did not recognize the Messiah in Jesus and accepted only the Old Testament. In the communities there were persons who sympathized with the mentality of the Pharisees (Acts 15: 5).
- Some converted Jews accepted Jesus as Messiah, but did not accept the freedom of Spirit with which the communities lived in the presence of the risen Jesus (Acts 15: 1).
- Others, whether converted Jews or Pagans, thought that with Jesus the end of the Old Testament had been attained and that, therefore, it was not necessary to maintain and to read the books of the Old Testament. From now on, only Jesus and the life in the Spirit! James criticizes this tendency (Acts 15:21).
- There were Christians who lived fully their life in community in the freedom of the Spirit that they no longer considered either the life of Jesus nor the Old Testament. They wanted only the Christ of the Spirit! They said, "Jesus is cursed!" (I Cor 12:3).
- The great concern in the Gospel of Matthew is to show that these three unities: (1) the Old Testament, (2) Jesus of Nazareth and (3) the life in the Spirit, cannot be separated. The three-form part of the same and unique project of God and communicate to us the central certainty of faith: the God

of Abraham and of Sarah is present in the community thanks to faith in Jesus of Nazareth.

Prayer: Psalm 27

Yahweh is My Light

Yahweh is my light and my salvation, whom should I fear?
Yahweh is the fortress of my life, whom should I dread?
When the wicked advance against me to eat me up, they, my opponents, my enemies, are the ones who stumble and fall.
Though an army pitch camp against me, my heart will not fear, though war break out against me, my trust will never be shaken.
One thing I ask of Yahweh, one thing I seek: to dwell in Yahweh's house all the days of my life, to enjoy the sweetness of Yahweh, to seek out His temple.
For He hides me away under His roof on the day of evil, He folds me in the recesses of His tent, sets me high on a rock.
Now my head is held high above the enemies who surround me; in His tent I will offer sacrifices of acclaim.
I will sing, I will make music for Yahweh.
Yahweh, hear my voice as I cry. Pity me, answer me!
Of You my heart has said, 'Seek His face!' Your face, Yahweh, I seek; do not turn away from me.
Do not thrust aside Your servant in anger, without You I am helpless.
Never leave me, never forsake me, God, my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, Yahweh will gather me up.
Yahweh, teach me Your way, lead me on the path of integrity because of my enemies; do not abandon me to the will of my foes false witnesses have risen against me, and are breathing out violence.
This I believe: I shall see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living.
Put your hope in Yahweh, be strong, let your heart be bold, put your hope in Yahweh.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice what your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, Your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Monday, February 9, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
watch over Your family and keep us safe in Your care, for all our hope is in You. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel reading - Mark 6: 53-56

After making the crossing to the other side of the sea, Jesus and his disciples came to land at Gennesaret and tied up there. As they were leaving the boat, people immediately recognized him. They scurried about the surrounding country and began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. Whatever villages or towns or countryside he entered, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; and as many as touched it were healed.

Reflection

The text of today's Gospel is the final part of the whole passage of Mark 6: 45-56, which presents three different themes:

a) Jesus goes to the mountain alone to pray (Mk 6: 45-46);

b) Immediately after, He walks on the water, goes toward the disciples who are struggling against the waves of the sea (Mk 6: 47-52);

Now, in today's Gospel, when they were already on the shore, the people look for Jesus so that He can cure their sick (Mk 6: 53-56).
Mark 6: 53-56. The search of the people. At that time, Jesus and His disciples having made the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret. When they disembarked, the people recognized Him at once. The people were numerous. They came from all parts, bringing their sick. The enthusiasm of the people who look for Jesus, recognize Him, and follow Him is surprising. What impels people to search for Jesus is not only the desire to encounter Him, to be with Him, but rather the desire to be cured of their sicknesses. Hurrying through the countryside, they brought the sick on stretchers to wherever they heard He went.
And wherever He went, to village or town or farm, they laid down the sick in the open spaces, begging Him to let them touch even the fringe of His cloak, and all those who touched Him were saved. The Gospel of Matthew comments and enlightens this fact quoting the figure of the Servant of Yahweh, of whom Isaiah says, "Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing, ours the sorrows he was carrying." (Is 53: 4 and Mt 8: 16- 17)
To teach and to cure, to cure and to teach. Right from the beginning of His apostolic activity, Jesus goes through all the villages of Galilee, to speak to the people about the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God (Mk 1: 14-15). There, wherever He finds people to listen to Him, He speaks and transmits the Good News of God; He accepts the sick, in all places: in the synagogues during the celebration of the Word on Saturday (Mk 1: 21; 3: 1; 6: 2); in the informal meetings

in the houses of friends (Mk 2: 1, 15; 7: 17; 9: 28; 10: 10); walking on the street with the disciples (Mk 2: 23); along the beach, sitting in a boat (Mk 4: 1); in the desert where He took refuge and where people looked for Him (Mk 1: 45; 6: 32-34); on the mountain from where He proclaimed the Beatitudes (Mt 5: 1); in the squares of the villages and of the cities, where the people took their sick (Mk 6: 55-56); in the Temple of Jerusalem, on the occasion of pilgrimages, every day without fear (Mk 14: 49)! To cure and to teach, to teach and to cure, that is what Jesus did the most (Mk 2: 13; 4: 1-2; 6: 34). This is what He used to do (Mk 10: 1). The people were amazed (Mk 12: 37; 1: 22, 27; 11: 18) and they looked for Him, as a crowd.
The origin of this great enthusiasm of the people was, on the one hand, the person of Jesus who called and attracted and, on the other hand, the abandonment in which people lived, they were like sheep without a shepherd (cf. Mk 6: 34). In Jesus, everything was revelation of what impelled Him from within! He not only spoke of God, but He also revealed Him. He communicated something of what He Himself lived and experienced. He not only announced the Good News. He Himself was a proof, a living witness of the Kingdom. In Him was manifested what happens when a human being allows God to reign in His life. What has value, what is important, is not only the words, but also, and above all, the witness, the concrete gesture. This is the Good News which attracts!

Personal Questions

The enthusiasm of the people for Jesus, looking for the sense of life and a solution for their ills. Where does this exist today? Does in exist in you? Does it exist in others?

What attracts is Jesus' loving attitude toward the poor and the abandoned. And I? How do I deal with the people excluded by society?

Concluding Prayer

How countless are Your works, Yahweh, all of them made so wisely!
The earth is full of Your creatures. Bless Yahweh, my soul. (Ps 104: 24, 35)

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
watch over Your family and keep us safe in Your care, for all our hope is in You.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 7: 1-13

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds.) So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts. You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." He went on to say, "How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, Honor your father and your mother, and whoever curses father or mother shall die. Yet you say, “If someone says to father or mother, ‘Any support you might have had from me is ‘*qorban*’ (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things."

Reflection

The Gospel today speaks about the religious traditions of that time and of the Pharisees who taught this tradition to the people, for example, to eat without washing their hands, as they said, “to eat with impure hands.” Many of these traditions were separated from life and had lost their significance. But even if this was the state of things, these traditions were kept and taught, either because of fear or because of superstition. The Gospel presents some instructions of Jesus concerning these traditions.

- Mark 7: 1-2: Control of the Pharisees and liberty of the disciples. The Pharisees and some, who had come from Jerusalem, observed how the disciples of Jesus ate bread with impure hands. Here there are three points which deserve to be highlighted: a) They were from Jerusalem, from the capital city! This means that they had come to observe and to control what Jesus did. b) The disciples do not wash their hands before eating! This means that being with Jesus impels them to have the courage to transgress the norms which tradition imposed on the people, but that no longer had any sense, any meaning for life. c) The practice of washing hands, which up until now continues to be an important norm of hygiene, had assumed for them a religious significance which served to control and discriminate against people.
- Mark 7: 3-4: The Tradition of the Ancients. The Tradition of the Ancients transmitted norms which had to be observed by the people in order to have the purity required by the Law. The observance of the Law was a very serious matter for the people of that time. They thought that an impure person could not receive the blessings promised by God to Abraham. The norms on purity were taught in order to open the way to God, source of peace. In reality,

instead of being a source of peace, the norms constituted a prison, slavery. For the poor, it was practically impossible to observe the hundreds of norms, of traditions and of laws. For this reason, they were considered ignorant and damned persons who did not know the Law (Jn 7: 49).

- Mark 7: 5: The scribes and the Pharisees criticize the behavior of Jesus' disciples. The scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus, zWhy do Your disciples not behave according to the tradition of the Ancients and eat the bread with impure hands? They think that they are interested in knowing the reason for the disciples' behavior. In reality, they criticize Jesus because He allows the disciples to transgress the norms of purity. The Pharisees formed a type of confraternity, the principal concern of which was to observe all the laws of purity. The were responsible for the doctrine. They taught the laws relative to the observance of purity.
- Mark 7: 6-13 Jesus criticizes the inconsistency of the Pharisees. Jesus answers quoting Isaiah: "This people approach me only in words, honors me only with lip service, while their hearts are far from me" (cf. Is 29: 13). Insisting on the norms of purity, the Pharisees emptied the content of the commandments of God's Law. Jesus quotes a concrete example. They said, "The person who offers his goods to the Temple cannot use these goods to help those in greater need." Thus, in the name of tradition they emptied the fourth commandment of its content, which commands to love father and mother. These people seem to be very observant, but they are only so externally. In their heart, they remain far away from God. As the hymn says, "His name is Jesus Christ and is hungry, and lives out on the sidewalk. And people when they pass by, sometimes do not stop, because they are afraid to arrive late to church!" At the time of Jesus, people in their wisdom were not in agreement with everything they were taught. They were hoping that one day the Messiah would come to indicate another way to attain purity. In Jesus this hope becomes a reality.

Personal Questions

- Do you know any religious tradition today which does not make much sense, but which continues to be taught?
- The Pharisees were practicing Jews, but their faith was divided, separated from the life of the people. This is why Jesus criticizes them. Would Jesus criticize us today? For what things?

Concluding Prayer

Our Lord, how majestic is Your name throughout the world! I look up at Your heavens, shaped by Your fingers,
at the moon and the stars You set firm— what are human beings that You spare a thought for them, or the child of Adam that you care for him? (Ps 8: 1, 3-4)

Wednesday, February 11, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
watch over Your family and keep us safe in Your care, for all our hope is in You. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel reading - Mark 7: 14-23

Jesus summoned the crowd again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.” When he got home away from the crowd his disciples questioned him about the parable. He said to them, “Are even you likewise without understanding? Do you not realize that everything that goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters not the heart but the stomach and passes out into the latrine?” (Thus, he declared all foods clean.) “But what comes out of the man, that is what defiles him. From within the man, from his heart, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.”

Reflection

The Gospel today is the continuation of the themes on which we meditated yesterday. Jesus helps the people and the disciples to understand better the significance of purity before God. For centuries, the Jews, in order not to contract impurity, observed many norms and customs bound to food, to drink, to dress, to hygiene of the body, to contact with persons of other races and religions, etc. (Mk 7: 3-4). For them it was forbidden to have contact with gentiles and to eat with them. In the 70’s, the time of Mark, some converted Jews said, “Now that we are Christians we have to abandon these ancient customs which separate us from converted gentiles!” But others thought that they had to continue with the observance of these laws of purity (cf. Col 2: 16,20-22). The attitude of Jesus, described in today’s Gospel, helps us to overcome this problem.

- Mark 7: 14-16: Jesus opens a new way to try to bring people closer to God. He says to the crowds, “Nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean; it is the things that come out of someone that make that person unclean (Mk 7: 15). Jesus overturns things: what is impure does not come from outside to the inside, as the Doctors of the Law taught, but what comes from inside to the outside. Thus, nobody ever needs to ask himself if this or that food is pure or impure. Jesus places what is pure and impure on

another level, not on the level of ethical behavior. He opens a new way to reach God, and in this way realizes the most profound design of the people. .

- Mark 7: 17-23: In the house, the disciples asked for an explanation. The disciples did not understand what Jesus wanted to say with that affirmation. When they reached the house, they ask for an explanation. The disciples' question surprises Jesus. He thought that they had understood the parable. In His explanation to the disciples He goes to the very bottom of the question of impurity. He declares that all food is pure! In other words, no food which enters into the human being from outside can make him become impure, because it does not go to the heart, but to the stomach and ends in the septic tank, but what makes one become impure, according to Jesus, is what comes out from within the heart to poison human relationships. And then He enumerates some of them: prostitution, murder, adultery, ambition, theft, etc. Thus, in many ways, by means of the word, of life together, of living close to one another, Jesus helps people to attain purity in another way. By means of the word He purified the lepers (Mk 1: 40-44), cast out unclean spirits (Mk 1: 26, 39; 3: 15, 22, etc.), and overcame death, which was the source of all impurity. Thanks to Jesus, who touches her, the woman who was excluded and considered impure is cured (Mk 5: 25-34). Without fear of being contaminated, Jesus eats together with people who were considered impure (Mk 2: 15-17).

The laws of purity at the time of Jesus. The people of that time were concerned very much about purity. The laws and the norms of purity indicated the necessary conditions to be able to place oneself before God and to feel well in His presence. One could not approach God in just any way, because God is holy. The Law stated, "Be holy because I am holy!" (Lv 19: 2). One who was not pure could not get close to God to receive the blessings promised to Abraham. The laws of what was pure and impure (Lv 11 to 16) were written after the time of slavery in Babylon, around the year 800 after the Exodus, but had its origin in the ancient mentality and customs of the people of the Bible. A religious and mystical vision of the world led people to appreciate things, people and animals, beginning from the category of purity (Gn 7: 2; Dt 14: 13-21; Nm 12: 10-15; Dt 24: 8-9).

In the context of the Persian domination, the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ, before the difficulties of reconstructing the Temple of Jerusalem and of the survival of the clergy, the priests who governed the people of the Bible increased the laws relative to poverty and obliged the people to offer sacrifices of purification for sin. Thus, after child birth (Lv 12: 1-8), menstruation (Lv 15: 19-24) the cure of a hemorrhage (Lv 15: 25-30), women had to offer sacrifices to recover purity. Lepers (Lv 13) or people who had contact with impure things or animals (Lv 5:1-13) also had to offer sacrifices. Part of this offering remained for the priests (Lv 5: 13). At the time of Jesus, to touch a leper, to eat with a tax collector or publican, to eat without washing your hands, and so many other activities rendered the person impure, and any contact with this person contaminated the others. For this reason, it was necessary to avoid an impure person. People lived with fear, always threatened by so many impure things which threatened life. They were obliged to live without trust, not trusting anything or anybody.

Now, all of a sudden, everything changes! Through faith in Jesus, it was possible to have purity and to feel good before God without having to observe all those laws and those norms of the ancient tradition . It was liberation! The Good News announced by Jesus took away all fear from the people, and they no longer had to be in a defensive situation all the time, and He gives them back the desire to live, and the joy of being children of God, without fear of being happy!

Personal Questions

- In your life, are there any traditions which you consider sacred and others which you do not? Which ones? Why?
- In the name of the tradition of the ancients, the Pharisees refused the Commandment of Jesus. Does this happen today? Where and when? Does it also happen in my life?

Concluding Prayer

The upright have Yahweh for their Savior, their refuge in times of trouble;
Yahweh helps them and rescues them, He will rescue them from the wicked,
and save them because they take refuge in Him. (Ps 37: 39-40)

Thursday, February 12, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
watch over Your family and keep us safe in Your care, for all our hope is in You.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 7: 24-30

Jesus went to the district of Tyre. He entered a house and wanted no one to know about it, but he could not escape notice. Soon a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him. She came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth, and she begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, “Let the children be fed first. For it is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” She replied and said to him, “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s scraps.” Then he said to her, “For saying this, you may go. The demon has gone out of your daughter.” When the woman went home, she found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

Reflection

In today's Gospel we see how Jesus is attentive to a foreign woman, belonging to another race and to another religion, even though this was forbidden by the religious law of that time. At the beginning Jesus did not want to help her, but the woman insists and obtains what she wants: the cure of her daughter. Jesus is trying to broaden the mentality of the disciples and of the people beyond the traditional vision. In the multiplication of the loaves, He had insisted on sharing (Mk 6: 30-44). He had declared all food pure (Mk 7: 1-23). In this episode of the Canaanite woman, He exceeds, goes beyond the frontiers of the national territory and accepts a foreign woman who did not belong to the people and with whom it was forbidden to speak. These initiatives of Jesus, which come from His experience of God the Father, were foreign to the mentality of the people of that time; Jesus helps the people to get out of their way of experiencing God in life.

- Mark 7: 24: Jesus gets out of that territory. In the Gospel yesterday (Mk 7: 14-23) and of the day before (Mk 7: 1-13), Jesus had criticized the incoherence of the tradition of the ancients and had helped the people and the disciples to get out of the prison of the laws of purity. Here, in Mark 7: 24, He leaves Galilee. He seems to want to get out from the prison of territory and race. Finding Himself outside, He does not want to be recognized. But His fame had reached there before. People had recourse to Jesus.
- Mark 7: 25-26: The situation. A woman approaches Jesus and begins to ask for help for her daughter who is sick. Mark says explicitly that she belongs to another race and to another religion. That means that she was a gentile. She throws herself at the feet of Jesus and begins to plead for the cure of her daughter, who was possessed by an unclean spirit. For the gentiles it was not a problem to go to Jesus. But for the Jews to live with gentiles was a problem!
- Mark 7: 27: The response of Jesus. Faithful to the norms of His religion, Jesus says that it is not appropriate to take the bread of the children and give it to little dogs! This was a hard phrase. The comparison came from life in the family. Even now, children and dogs are numerous, especially in poor neighborhoods. Jesus affirms one thing: no mother takes away bread from the mouth of her children to give it to the dogs. In this case the children were the Hebrew people and the little dogs, the gentiles. At the time of the Old Testament, because of rivalry among the people, the people used to call other people dogs (1 Sam 17: 43). In the other Gospels, Jesus explains the reason for His refusal: "I have been sent only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel!" (Mt 15: 24). In other words, the Father does not want Me to take care of this woman!
- Mark 7: 28: The reaction of the woman. She agrees with Jesus, but she extends the comparison and applies it to her case: Jesus, this is true, but the little dogs also eat the crumbs that fall from the table of the children! It is as if she said, "If I am a little dog, then I have the right of little dogs, that is, the crumbs that fall from the table belong to me!" She simply draws conclusions from the parable that Jesus told and shows that even in the house of Jesus, the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table of the children. And in the house

of Jesus, that is, in the Christian community, the multiplication of the bread for the children was so abundant that there were twelve baskets full left over (Mk 6: 42) for the little dogs, that is, for her, for the gentiles!

- Mark 7: 29-30: The reaction of Jesus: "Because of what you have said, go. The devil has gone out of your daughter!" In the other Gospels it is made more explicit: "Great is your faith! May it be done as you wish!" (Mt 15: 28). If Jesus accepts the woman's request, it is because He understands that now the Father wanted Him to accept her request. This episode helps us to understand something of the mystery which envelops the person of Jesus and His life with the Father. Observing the reactions and the attitudes of the people, Jesus discovers the will of the Father in the events of life. The attitude of the woman opens a new horizon in the life of Jesus. Thanks to her, He discovers better the project of the Father for all those who seek to liberate themselves from the chains which imprison their energy. Thus, throughout the pages of the Gospel of Mark, there is a growing opening toward the people. In this way, Mark leads the readers to open themselves before the reality of the world which surrounds them and to overcome the preconceptions which prevent a peaceful living together among the people. This opening toward gentiles appears very clearly in the final order given by Jesus to the disciples, after His Resurrection: "Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Gospel to all creation" (Mk 16: 15).

Personal Questions

- Concretely, what do you do to live peacefully with people of other Christian Churches? In the neighborhood where you live, are there people of other religions? Which?
- Do you normally speak with people of other religions? What kind of broadening of mind does this text demand from us today, in the family and in the community?

Concluding Prayer

Blessed are those who keep to what is just, whose conduct is always upright!
Remember me, Yahweh, in Your love for Your people. Come near to me with
Your saving power. (Ps 106: 3-4)

Friday, February 13, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
watch over Your family and keep us safe in Your care, for all our hope is in You.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 7: 31-37

Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "*Ephphatha*!" (that is, "Be opened!") And immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly. He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. They were exceedingly astonished, and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Reflection

In today's Gospel, Jesus cures a deaf-mute. This episode is not known very much. In the episode of the Canaanite woman, Jesus goes beyond the frontiers of the national territory and accepts a foreign woman who does not belong to the people and with whom it was forbidden to speak. In today's Gospel we notice this same opening.

- Mark 7: 31. The region of the Decapolis. At that time, returning from the territory of Tyre, Jesus went to Sidon toward the Lake of Galilee, right through the Decapolis territory. Decapolis literally means "ten cities." This was a region of ten cities in the southeast part of Galilee, and its population was gentile.
- Mark 7: 31-35. To open the ears and to loosen the tongue. A deaf-mute man was brought before Jesus. People wanted Jesus to place His hands on him. But Jesus goes far beyond this request. He leads the man aside from the crowd, puts His finger into the man's ears and touches his tongue with spittle. Looking up to Heaven, He sighed deeply and said, "*Ephphatha*!" that is, "Be opened!" At that same moment, his ears were opened, and at once the impediment of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. Jesus wants the people to open their ears and to loosen their tongues!
- Mark 7: 36-37: Jesus wants no publicity. And He ordered them not to tell anyone about it, but the more He insisted, the more widely they proclaimed it. Their admiration was unbounded and they said, "Everything He does is good; He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak." He prohibits that the cure be proclaimed, but in fact that does not happen. Those who have experienced what Jesus has done go and tell others, whether Jesus wants it or not! The people who were present at the cure began to proclaim what they had seen and summarize the Good News as follows: Everything He does is good; He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak! This affirmation of the people makes us remember creation, when it was said, "God saw that everything was good!" (Gen 1: 31). And this also recalls the prophecy of Isaiah,

where he says that in the future the deaf will hear and the dumb will speak (Is 29: 28; 35: 5, cf. Mt 11: 5).

The recommendation not to tell anybody. Sometimes, the attention which Mark's Gospel attributes to the prohibition of Jesus to proclaim the cure is exaggerated, as if Jesus had some secret that He wanted to keep. In the majority of cases in which Jesus works a miracle, He does not ask for silence. Rather, He once even asked for publicity (Mk 5: 19). Sometimes, He orders not to announce the healing (Mk 1: 44; 5: 43; 7: 36; 8: 26), but obtains the opposite result. The more He prohibits it, the more the Good News is proclaimed (Mk 1: 28, 45; 3: 7-8; 7: 36-37). It is useless to prohibit! The interior force of the Good News is so great that it spreads by itself.

Growing openness in the Gospel of Mark. Throughout the pages of Mark's Gospel, there is a growing openness toward the other populations. Thus Mark leads the readers to open themselves toward the reality of the world around and to overcome the preconceptions which prevent peaceful co-existence among the different populations. When He passed through the Decapolis, a gentile region, Jesus responded to the request of the people of the place and cured a deaf-mute man. He is not afraid to be contaminated with the impurity of a gentile, because in curing him, He touches his ears and his tongue. Two Jews and the disciples themselves have difficulty hearing and understanding that a gentile who was deaf and dumb can now hear and speak thanks to Jesus who touched him. It recalls the Song of the Servant, "The Lord God has opened the ears, and I listen to Him" (Is 50: 4-5). In driving the merchants out of the Temple, Jesus criticizes the unjust trade and affirms that the Temple should be a house of prayer for all peoples (Mk 11: 17). In the parable of the wicked tenants, Mark refers to the fact that the message will be taken away from the chosen people, the Jews, and will be given to others, the gentiles (Mk 12: 1-12). After the death of Jesus, Mark presents the profession of faith of a gentile at the foot of the Cross. In quoting the Roman centurion and how he recognizes the Son of God in Jesus, Mark is saying that the gentile is more faithful than the disciples and more faithful than the Jews (Mk 15: 39). The openness to the gentiles appears very clearly in the final order given by Jesus to the disciples, after His Resurrection: "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation" (Mk 16: 15).

Personal Questions

- Jesus shows a great openness toward people of another race, another religion and of other customs. We Christians, today, do we have the same openness? Do I have this openness?
- Definition of the Good News: Everything Jesus does is good! Am I good News for others?

Concluding Prayer

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

Sing to Yahweh, bless His name! (Ps 96: 1-2)

Saturday, February 14, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Father,
watch over Your family and keep us safe in Your care, for all our hope is in You. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 8: 1-10

In those days when there again was a great crowd without anything to eat, Jesus summoned the disciples and said, “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will collapse on the way, and some of them have come a great distance.” His disciples answered him, “Where can anyone get enough bread to satisfy them here in this deserted place?”
Still he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They replied, “Seven.” He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then, taking the seven loaves he gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they distributed them to the crowd. They also had a few fish. He said the blessing over them and ordered them distributed also. They ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over–seven baskets. There were about four thousand people. He dismissed the crowd and got into the boat with his disciples and came to the region of Dalmanutha.

Reflection

The Gospel today speaks about the second multiplication of the loaves. The unitive thread of several episodes in this part of the Gospel of Mark is the food, the bread. After the banquet of death (Mk 6: 17-29), comes the banquet of life (Mk 6: 30-44). During the crossing of the Lake the disciples are afraid, because they have understood nothing of the bread multiplied in the desert (Mk 6: 51-52). Then Jesus declares that all food is pure (Mk 7: 1-23). In Jesus’ conversation with the Canaanite woman, the gentiles ate the crumbs which fell from the table of the children (Mk 7: 24-30). And here, in today s Gospel, Mark speaks about the second multiplication of the loaves (Mk 8: 1-10).

- Mark 8: 1-3: The situation of the people and the reaction of Jesus. The crowds who gathered around Jesus in the desert had no food to eat. Jesus calls the disciples and presents the problem to them: I feel pity for this people, because for three days they have been following Me and have not eaten. If I send them

away to their homes without eating, they will faint on the way; and some came from very far! In Jesus' concern there are two important things: a) People forget home and food and follow Jesus to the desert! This is a sign that Jesus aroused great sympathy, up to the point that people followed Him into the desert and remained with Him three days! b) Jesus does not ask them to solve the problem. He only expresses His concern to the disciples. It seems to be a problem without a solution.

- Mark 8: 4: The reaction of the disciples: the first misunderstanding. The disciples then think of a solution, according to which someone had to bring bread for the people. It does not even occur to them that the solution could come from the people themselves. They say: And how could we feed all these people in the desert? In other words, they think of a traditional solution. Someone has to find the money, buy bread and distribute it to the people. They themselves perceive that, in that desert, to buy bread, this solution is not possible, but they see no other possibility to solve the problem. That is, if Jesus insists in not sending the people back to their homes, there will be no way to feed them!
- Mark 8: 5-7: The solution found by Jesus. First of all, He asks how much bread they have: seven loaves! Then He orders the people to sit down. Then, He takes those seven loaves of bread, gives thanks, breaks them and gives them to the disciples to distribute; and they distribute them to the crowds. And He does the same thing with the fish. As in the first multiplication (Mk 6: 41), the way in which Mark describes Jesus' attitude, recalls the Eucharist. The message is this: participation in the Eucharist should lead to the gift and to the sharing of bread with those who have no bread.
- Mark 8: 8-10: The result: Everyone ate, they were satisfied, and bread was left over! This was an unexpected solution, which began within the people, with the few loaves of bread that they had brought! In the first multiplication, twelve baskets of bread were leftover: here, seven. In the first one, they served five thousand people. Here four thousand. In the first one there were five loaves of bread and two fish. Here, seven loaves of bread and a few fish.
- The time of the dominant ideology. The disciples thought one way, Jesus thinks in another way. In the way of thinking of the disciples there is the dominant ideology, the common way of thinking of people. Jesus thinks in a different way. It is not by going with Jesus and living in a community that a person is already a saint and renewed. Among the disciples, the old mentality always emerges again, because the leaven of Herod and of the Pharisees (Mk 8: 15), that is, the dominant ideology, had profound roots in the life of those people. The conversion requested by Jesus is a deep conversion. He wants to uproot the various types of leaven.

  The leaven of the community closed up in itself, without any openness. Jesus responds: The one who is not against is in favor! (Mk 9: 39-40). For Jesus, what is important is not if the person forms part of the community or not, but if he/she is generous, available or not to do the good which the community has to do.

The leaven of the group which considers itself superior to others. Jesus responds: You do not know what spirit animates you (Lk 9: 55).

The leaven of the mentality of class and of competition, which characterized the society of the Roman Empire and which permeated the small community which was just beginning. Jesus responds: Let the first one be the last one (Mk 9: 35). This is the point on which He insists the most; it is the strongest point of His witness: "I have not come to be served, but to serve" (Mk 10: 45; Mt 20: 28; Jn 13: 1-16).

The leaven of the mentality of the culture of the time. Jesus responds: Allow the little ones to come to me! Jesus indicates that the little ones are the models of discipleship for adults: anyone who does not accept the kingdom of God as a child will not enter it (Lk 18: 17).

The reading of the Gospel, done in community, can help us to change life and the vision and can help us to continue to convert ourselves and to be faithful to the words of Jesus.

Personal Questions

- We can always encounter misunderstandings with friends and enemies. What is the misunderstanding between Jesus and the disciples on the occasion of the multiplication of the loaves? How does Jesus face this misunderstanding?
- In your house, with your neighbors or in the community, have there been misunderstandings? How have you reacted?
- Has your community had misunderstandings or conflicts with the civil or ecclesiastical authority? How did this happen?
- What is the leaven which today prevents the realization of the Gospel and should be eliminated?

Concluding Prayer

Lord, You have been our refuge from age to age. Before the mountains were born, before the earth and the world came to birth, from eternity to eternity You are God. (Ps 90: 1-2)

Sunday, February 15, 2026

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

LECTIO

Opening Prayer

"Speak, Lord, that your servant is listening. " Speak to us now, Lord! We want to make room for your Word, to allow the words of the Gospel permeate our lives so that you become the light the strength of our way, vivify and transform our attitudes. We all want to mature in the way of listening to your words so that our hearts are transformed.
In us, there is a desire reading and understand why we are expecting for your bounty and generosity to be guided in comprehending of your Word.
Let your word to our hearts cannot find any obstacles or resistance. That your word of life does not flow in vain or in the dried desert of our lives. Enter in our empty hearts with the power of your Word, come to take the place among our thoughts and feelings, come to live with us in the light of your truth.

Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 5: 17-37)

Jesus said to his disciples:
“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.
Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place.
Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, whoever is angry with brother will be liable to judgment; and whoever says to brother, “Raqa,“ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, “You fool, will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise, your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny. “You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.
It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.
It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna. “It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife -- unless the marriage is unlawful -- causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. “Again, you have heard that it was said to your

ancestors, Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow. But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God‟s throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black.
Let your “Yes‟ mean “Yes,” and your “No‟ mean “No.‟ Anything more is from the evil one.”

Moment of Silence

The silence creates an internal atmosphere of intimacy and at the same time increase the spiritual taste of your Word.

MEDITATIO

Key to the Reading

- Mt 5-7: The context in the “Sermon on the Mount”

  Jesus addressed to the crowds who are in hurry to listen to his teaching. They are amazed with his authority. He speaks to them with strong demand and points out that we are children of God and brothers and sister to each others. In the attempt to give the full meaning of the precept of the Jewish law.

  The evangelist, in locating the first discourse of Jesus on the mountain, wished to draw the attention to the readers the image of Moses giving the Law on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24: 9). This teaching takes place as Jesus is seated, a position that recalls the attitude of the Jewish rabbi who interprets Scripture to his disciples. It is difficult to capture the richness of the themes that run through long speech, as some scholars prefer to call it “the evangelical words of Jesus"(cf. 7: 28).

  Our liturgical text is preceded by a prologue in which the Beatitudes are presented as the fulfillment of the Law (Mt 5: 3 to 16). The message of Jesus in this teaching focuses on happiness in the biblical sense, which places man in right relationship with God and, therefore, with total life: happiness tied to the reality of the kingdom of heaven. In a second part Jesus develops the theme of "justice" of the kingdom of heaven (5: 17 to 7: 12).

- Mt 5: 17 - Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets.

  In these first statements Jesus presents himself as the one who come to "fulfills the law": "Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets: I came not to abolish but to fully fulfill them " (v.17). Jesus declares that he is the fulfillment of the law.

  The consequences of such words are thus understood by the reader: only through him what we can enter the kingdom of heaven, even the smallest of the commandments makes sense through Him. It's like saying that Jesus is the measure to enter the kingdom of heaven: in Him, anyone, great or small,

depends on the choice of letting ourselves be led by one who fulfills the Law and the Prophets. Henceforth the law, the teaching of the prophets, the justice the salvation must bond with Him.

The reader knows that in the Old Testament these truths were seen like separate and distinguished among them: the Law contained the will of God; justice expressed the human engagement in order to observe the contents of God"s will in the Law; the Prophets, exegetes of the Law, were the witnesses of the implementation of the fidelity of God in the history. In the person of Jesus these three truths are unified: they find their meaning and value. Jesus declares openly that he has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. What do these affirmations of Jesus mean? What is the meaning of "the Law and the Prophets"? We cannot be thinking of Jesus carrying out prophecies (from a point of view of the content, or in the literal sense) of the Law and the Prophets, but rather the instructions of the Law and the Prophets. But in particular way what means "to abolish," "to fulfill" the instructions of the Law and the Prophets? The answer is placed at two levels.

The first one regards the instruction of Jesus, that it does not change the contents of the Law and the Prophets and whose function was didactic-instructive; indeed, Mathew considers the Prophets like the witnesses of the commandment of love (Os 6: 6 // Mt 9: 13; 12: 7). That Jesus accomplishes the instructions of the Law and the Prophets can mean that "manifest them in their meaning," "brings to complete expression" (U. Luz); it is from excluding the meaning of "to invalidate," "to abolish," "not to observe," "to break (to smash).

The second level is referred to the involved acting of Jesus: does the law itself changes or not? In this case to fulfill the Law could mean that Jesus, with its behavior, adds something that lacks or brings to fulfillment, it perfects the instructions of the Law. In more concrete terms: Jesus in His life, with its obedience to the Father, "accomplished" the requirements demanded from the Law and the Prophets; after all, He observes the Law completely. More meaningfully: through His dead and resurrection Jesus has fulfilled the Law. To us it seems that the emphasis is placed on the behavior of Jesus: with obedience and practice He has fulfilled the Law and the Prophets.

- Mt 5: 19: Jesus who teaches the will of the Father and the fulfillment of the Law.

  To the reader the use of the verbs "to act and to teach" does not escape: the precepts of the Law for "who will observe them and will teach them." Such aspects pick in full load the total image of Jesus in the thought of Mathew: Jesus who teaches the will of God and the achievement of the Law is the obedience son of the Father (3: 13-4: 11). Here the behavior model that appears to us from this Gospel page. Sure, the emphasis is on the implementation of the Law through obedience, but that does not exclude a fulfillment by means of His instruction. We do not forget that to Mathew it is important the conformity of the practice with the instruction of Jesus: he is master in

obedience and the practice. However, the praxis as it infers from the warming to watch itself from the pseudo prophets in 7: 20 is priority: “From their fruits you will recognize them.” It is interesting to notice that Mathew uses this verb to complete, to fulfill, only for Jesus: only him completes the Law, only His person introduces the characteristics of the fullness. Here roots its authoritative invitation, that becomes a “shipment,” a task to complete the Law in fullness: “I say to you…” (vv. 18: 20).

- Mt 5: 20 Jesus fulfills justice.

  Such implementation is distinguished from the ways to comprise it and to live it in the Judaism; in Jesus a new specificity of the justice is introduced: “I say to you in fact: if your justice will not exceed that one of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will not enter in the kingdom of heaven” (v. 20). The scribes are the theologians and the official interpreters of Writing (5: 21-48), the Pharisees, instead, are the actively engaged lays of that time, excessively taken from the practice of mercy (6: 1-18). Justice practiced from these two groups is not sufficient, cannot serve from model: it prevents to enter in the kingdom of heaven. The addressees of this warning, in the end, are the disciples; it is addressed to us. Sure the will of God it is drowned to the Law, but he is Jesus who incarnates a new way to put the justice in practice. Jesus asks one “greater justice,” than, what does it refers to? That one of the Scribes and the Pharisees has been aligned to the justice of the men, that one preached from Jesus, instead, demands one justice more substantial, significantly greater to that one practiced from the Judaism. In what consists this “more” our text does not precise immediately, it is necessary to read the continuation of the instruction of Jesus.

- Mt 5: 20 The radicalism of the justice preached from Jesus.

  It is not about to stand out in radical way some commandments of the Law; it is rather primary that the commandment of the love is to the center of these single commandments. The “most quantitative one” guides to strengthen the qualitative aspect in front of God: the commandment of love. The believing community is called to subordinate to the commandment of love, seen as central, the various commandments of Law. There is no tension between the single garnishments and the commandment of love. The instructions of Jesus become binding, online with the instructions from the Old Testament. For Jesus there is no opposition between the single prescription of the Law and the commandment of love: they are to be considered in a harmonious relationship because in their entirety it is offered the will of God to us (U. Luz).

- Mt 5: 23-25: How to relate between siblings?

  Between the radical requirements inborn in inviting to follow him, Jesus faces the argument of the relations fraternity. It is not enough to define all the engagement to the external action of not to kill: “You have heard that it was said from the old ones: You will not kill…” (v. 21); it is essential to break off such narrow norm therefore, but also radical: not to kill! The fifth commandment recommended the respect of life (Es 20: 13; Dt 5: 17). A deepening or a

completely new horizon in the spirit of the Decalogue comes forward now. If it is not concurred to kill a person physically it wants to say that it is allowed to make it in other ways: hatred, the offense, the gossip, the depreciation, the anger, the insult. In the completely new perspective of the Speech of the Mountain, every lack of love towards the next one involves the same guiltiness of the homicide. In fact, the temper, the anger, the depreciation are rooted in an undivided heart of love. For Jesus s' it does not break the single Law just by killing, but also with all those actions that they try to destroy or "to make useless" the other.

- Jesus doesn't deal the issue of who is right or who is wrong but who "offends the brother or slanders him in public does not have more space in front of God, because homicide" (Bonhoeffer, Sequela 120). From here the severity that denies value to the offer, the cult, the prayer and the Eucharistic celebration. Who has separated himself from the brother also has separated himself from the relation with God. It needs, then, of a previous reconciliation with the brother that has something against him: Against you, not you against him. Innovation in this word, even if not easy is one to share. To my brother that has "something against me" I answer coming upon him: "first, go to reconcile yourself," without increasing the distance. It is not alone a question of asking forgiveness: it is urgent to reconstruct the fraternal relations because the good of the brother is my good. Jesus says: "Go before"... In the first place, before praying, before donating, before that the other makes the first step, is the movement of my heart, of my body towards the other. Such going towards the other it has the purpose of the resetting of the laceration; a movement that stretches to the reconciliation.

Some Questions

To put the meditation and practice.

- In your life, do you always open to Jesus' request for a greater justice? Are you aware that they are not yet in full justice?
- In the practice of justice, do you match it with the act of God? Do not you know that justice live in the human relations has been given to us? A confirmation you may find it the word of the Apostle Paul: "My righteousness is not having as one arising from the law, but that which comes from faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God based on faith"(Phil 3: 9).
- The expression of Jesus "but I say to you" it is for us an imperative or a theoretical commandment? Are we aware that the more and more great justice is nothing else that the continuous availability to be confronted with the existence of Christ, the only one just (fair)?
- Our justice is engaged to imitate something of the justice of God, of his gratuity, his creativity? God renders us just, free us from the paralysis of the sin; once rendered free, we mutually transmit this liberation, practicing a

justice that it does not judge, but always leaves opened, indeed it creates for the other spaces of a possible return to one authentic life

Orario

Psalm 119 (1-5, 17-18, 33-34)

The Psalm invites to us to obey to the law of God with all the personal effort. Such possibility is not only an external obligation but a gift granted to the man that put its confidence in God. The practical of the new justice in order to enter in the Kingdom of heaven cannot only come from an individualistic commitment, but from a familiar and constant dialogue with the Word of God.
Happy those whose way is blameless, who walk by the teaching of the LORD.
Happy those who observe God's decrees, who seek the LORD with all their heart.
They do no wrong; they walk in God's ways.
You have given them the command to keep your precepts with care. May my ways be firm in the observance of your laws!
Be kind to your servant that I may live, that I may keep your word. Open my eyes to see clearly the wonders of your teachings.
LORD, teach me the way of your laws; I shall observe them with care. Give me insight to observe your teaching, to keep it with all my heart.

Final Prayer

The Word that we have listened and meditated on has appeared to us quite strong, oh my Lord, and has put in crisis our attitude: “Go to reconcile yourself!” In the first place, before being in front of the altar, before introducing our things and donate them to you with love, before that it is the brother to take the initiative, help our heart to complete that movement that recomposes the conflict, the laceration, therefore, to recompose the lost harmony.

Contemplatio

Saint John Chrysostom invites us with force and firmness: “When you refuse to pardon your enemy you, damage yourself, not him. What you are preparing is a punishment for you in the day of the judgment” (Speeches 2,6). Let yourself be transformed by God’s love of, in order to change your life, to convert yourself, to find again the way of life.

Monday, February 16, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord God,

forgive us that in our weak faith we ask sometimes for signs and wonders. We know that You are our Father, but it is not always easy for us to recognize Your loving presence.
Give us eyes of faith to see the sign that You are with us in Jesus and His message. We say so reluctantly, for it is painful.
Purify our trust in You and in Jesus that we may become more mature Christians, who love You through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 8: 11-13

The Pharisees came forward and began to argue with Jesus, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. He sighed from the depth of his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." Then he left them, got into the boat again, and went off to the other shore.

Reflection

Mark 8: 11-13: The Pharisees ask for a sign from Heaven. Today's Gospel narrates a discussion of the Pharisees with Jesus. Jesus also, as it happened with Moses in the Old Testament, had fed hungry people in the desert, by multiplying the bread (Mk 8: 1-10). This is a sign that He presented himself before the people as a new Moses. But the Pharisees were not capable of perceiving the meaning of the multiplication of the loaves. They continued to discuss with Jesus and ask for a sign from Heaven. They had understood nothing of all that Jesus had done. Jesus sighed profoundly, probably feeling disgust and sadness before so much blindness. He concludes by saying, "No sign will be given to this generation." He left them and went toward the other side of the lake. It is useless to show a beautiful picture to one who does not want to open his eyes. People who close their eyes cannot see!
The danger of dominating ideology. Here we can clearly perceive how the yeast of Herod and the Pharisees (Mk 8: 15), the dominating ideology of the time, made people lose their capacity to analyze events objectively. This yeast came from afar and had sunk profound roots in the life of the people. It went so far as to contaminate the disciples' mentality and manifested itself in many ways. With the formation which Jesus gave them, He tried to uproot this yeast.
The following are some examples of this fraternal help which Jesus gave to His disciples:

- The mentality of a closed group. On a certain day a person not belonging to the community used the name of Jesus to drive out devils. John saw this and forbade it: "We tried to stop him because he was not one of ours" (Mk 9: 38). John thought he had the monopoly on Jesus and wanted to prevent others from using the name of Jesus to do good. John wanted a community closed in upon itself. It was the yeast of the Elected People, the separated People! Jesus responds, "Do not stop him! Anyone who is not against us is for us!" (Mk 9: 39-40).

- The mentality of a group which considers itself superior to others. At times, the Samaritans did not want to offer hospitality to Jesus. The reaction of some of the disciples was immediate: “May fire descend from heaven and burn them up!” (Lk 9: 54). They thought that because they were with Jesus, everyone had to welcome Him, to accept Him. They thought they had God on their side to defend Him. It was the yeast of the Chosen People, the Privileged People! Jesus reproaches them: “Jesus turned and rebuked them” (Lk 9: 55).
- The mentality of competition and prestige. The disciples discussed among themselves about the first place (Mk 9: 33-34). It was the yeast of class and of competitiveness, which characterized the official religion and the society of the Roman Empire. It was already getting into the small community around Jesus. Jesus reacts and orders them to have a contrary mentality: “If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last” (Mk 9: 35).
- The mentality of those who marginalize the little ones. The disciples scolded little children. It was the yeast of the mentality of that time, according to which children did not count and should be disciplined by adults. Jesus rebukes the disciples: “Let the little children come to me!” (Mk 10: 14). The children become the teachers of the adults: Anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it . (Lk 18: 17).

As it happened in the time of Jesus, today also the dominating ideology arises once again and appears even in the life of the community and of the family. The prayerful reading of the Gospel, done in community, can help to change our view of things and to deepen in us conversion and the fidelity which Jesus asks from us.

For Personal Confrontation

Faced with the alternative either to have faith in Jesus or to ask for a sign from heaven, the Pharisees want a sign from heaven. They were not able to believe in Jesus. The same thing happens to me. What have I chosen?
The yeast of the Pharisees prevented the disciples from perceiving the presence of the Kingdom in Jesus. Has some residue of this yeast of the Pharisees remained in me?

Concluding Prayer

Lord, You are generous and act generously; teach me Your will. (Ps 119: 68)

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,

when we do not see clearly in life, when suffering comes our way, we tend to blame You or people.
Help us to realize clearly how much of the evil around us comes from within ourselves: from our greed for riches and power, from our self-complacency and selfishness.
Speak to us Your word of forgiveness and change us from a silent majority of evil into solidarity of love, by the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Mark 8: 14-21

The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. Jesus enjoined them, "Watch out, guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." They concluded among themselves that it was because they had no bread. When he became aware of this he said to them, "Why do you conclude that it is because you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or comprehend? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes and not see, ears and not hear? And do you not remember, when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many wicker baskets full of fragments you picked up?" They answered Him, "Twelve." "When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many full baskets of fragments did you pick up?" They answered Him, "Seven." He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Reflection

Yesterday's Gospel spoke of the misunderstanding between Jesus and the Pharisees. Today's Gospel speaks of the misunderstanding between Jesus and the disciples and shows that the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod (religion and government), had taken possession of the mentality of the disciples to the point of hindering them from listening to the Good News.

- Mark 8: 14-16: Attention to the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod. Jesus warns the disciples to look out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod. But they do not understand the words of Jesus. They think that He is speaking like that because they forgot to buy bread. Jesus says one thing and they understood another. This clash was the result of the insidious influence of the yeast of the Pharisees on the mentality and on the life of the disciples.
- Mark 8: 17-18a: Jesus' question. In the face of this almost total lack of perception in the disciples, Jesus rapidly asks them a series of questions, without waiting for an answer. They are hard questions which express very serious things and reveal the total lack of understanding on the part of the disciples. Even if it seems unbelievable, the disciples reach the point in which there is no difference between them and the enemies of Jesus. First, Jesus had become sad seeing the hardness of heart of the Pharisees and of the Herodians (Mk 3: 5). Now, the disciples themselves have hardened their hearts (Mk 8: 17). First, those outside (Mk 4:11) do not understand the parables because they have eyes and do not see, listen but do not understand (Mk 4:12). Now, the disciples themselves understand nothing, because they have eyes and do not see, listen, but do not understand (Mk 8:18). Besides, the

image of the hardened heart evoked the hardness of heart of the people of the Old Testament who always drifted away from the path. It also evoked the hardened heart of Pharaoh who oppressed and persecuted the people (Ex 4: 21; 7: 13; 8: 11, 15, 28; 9: 7). The expression "they have eyes and do not see, listen but do not understand" evoked not only the people without faith criticized by Isaiah (Is 6: 9-10), but also the adorers of false gods, of whom the psalm says, "They have eyes and see nothing, have ears and hear nothing" (Ps 115: 5-6).

- Mark 8: 18b-21: The two questions regarding the bread. The two final questions refer to the multiplication of the loaves: How many baskets did they gather the first time? Twelve! And the second time? Seven! Like the Pharisees, the disciples also, though they had collaborated actively in the multiplication of the loaves, did not succeed in understanding the meaning. Jesus ends by saying, "Do you still not understand?" The way in which Jesus asks these questions, one after the other, almost without waiting for an answer, seems to cut the conversation. It reveals a very big clash. What is the cause of this clash?

- The cause of the clash between Jesus and the disciples. The cause of the clash between Jesus and the disciples was not due to ill will on their part. The disciples were not like the Pharisees. The Pharisees did not understand, but in them there was malice. They used religion to criticize and to condemn Jesus (Mk 2: 7, 16, 18, 24; 3: 5, 22-30). The disciples were good people. Theirs was not ill will, because even if they were victims of the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, they were not interested in defending the system of the Pharisees and the Herodians against Jesus. Then, what was the cause? The cause of the clash between Jesus and the disciples had something to do with the Messianic hope. Firstly, among the Jews there was an enormous variety of Messianic expectations. Second, the diverse interpretations of the prophecies: there were people who expected a Messiah King (cf. Mk 15: 9, 32); others, a Messiah Saint or Priest (cf. Mk 1: 24); others, a Messiah subversive Warrior (cf. Lk 23: 5; Mk 15: 6; 13: 6-8); others, a Messiah Doctor (cf. Jn 4: 25; Mk 1: 22-27); still others, a Messiah Judge (cf. Lk 3: 5-9; Mk 1:8); others, a Messiah Prophet (6: 4, 14, 65). It seems that nobody expected a Messiah Servant, announced by the Prophet Isaiah (Is 42: 1; 49: 3; 52: 13). They did not consider the messianic hope as a service of the people of God to humanity. Each group, according to their own interests and according to their social class, awaited the Messiah, but wanted to reduce Him to their own hope. This is why the title Messiah, according to the person or social position, could mean very different things. There was a great confusion of ideas! And precisely in this attitude of Servant is found the key which turns on a light in the disciples' darkness and helps them toward conversion. It is only in accepting the Messiah as the Suffering Servant in Isaiah, that they will be capable of opening their eyes and understanding the Mystery of God in Jesus.

For Personal Confrontation

What is for us today the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod? What does it mean today for me to have a hardened heart?

The yeast of Herod and the Pharisees prevents the disciples from understanding the Good News. Perhaps, today the propaganda of television prevents us from understanding the Good News of Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

I need only say, "I am slipping,"for Your faithful love, Yahweh, to support me; however great the anxiety of my heart, Your consolations soothe me. (Ps 94: 18-19)

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Ash Wednesday

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that You read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, You helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of Your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection. Create in us silence so that we may listen to Your voice in creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May Your word guide us so that we, too, like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, may experience the force of Your resurrection and witness to others that You are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice, and peace. We ask this of You, Jesus, Son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18

A Key to the Reading:

The Gospel of Ash Wednesday is taken from the Sermon on the Mount and offers us help in understanding the practice of the three works of mercy: prayer, almsgiving and fasting and the way to spend the time of Lent well. The manner of practicing these three works has changed over the centuries, according to the culture and customs of people and their state of health. Old people today still remember when there was a strict and compulsory fast of forty days throughout Lent. In spite of changes in the practice of the works of mercy, there still is the human and Christian obligation

- to share our goods with the poor (almsgiving),
- to live in contact with the Creator (prayer) and
- to be able to control our urges and desires (fasting). The words of Jesus on which we meditate can give us the necessary creativity to find new

forms of living these three practices so important in the life of Christians.

A Division of the Text:

- Matthew 6: 1 – A general key to the understanding of the teaching that follows
- Matthew 6: 2 – How not to go about almsgiving
- Matthew 6: 3-4 – How to go about almsgiving
- Matthew 6:5 – How not to pray
- Matthew 6: 6 – How to pray
- Matthew 6: 16 – How not to fast
- Matthew 6: 17-18 – How to fast

Text:

Jesus said to his disciples: "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection.

- What touched you or pleased you most in this text?
- What is the meaning of Jesus' initial warning?
- What does Jesus criticize and teach about almsgiving? Make a resume for yourself.

- What does Jesus criticize and teach about prayer? Make a resume for yourself.
- What does Jesus criticize and teach about fasting? Make a resume for yourself.

To Go Deeper into the Theme

The Context:

Jesus speaks of three things: almsgiving (Mt 6: 1-6), prayer (Mt 6: 5-15) and fasting (Mt 6: 16-18). These were the three works of mercy of the Jews. Jesus criticizes the fact that they practice these works to be seen by others (Mt 6: 1). He will not allow that the practice of justice and mercy be used as a means to social promotion within the community (Mt 6: 2, 5, 16). In the words of Jesus there comes to light a new kind of relationship with God that is revealed to us. He says, “Your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you" (Mt 6: 4), ”Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him” (Mt 6: 8), “If you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours” (Mt 6: 14). Jesus presents us with a new way of approaching the heart of God. A meditation on His words concerning the works of mercy may help us discover this new way.

A Commentary on the Text:

- Matthew 6: 1: A General Key to the Teaching that Follows

  Jesus says, “Be careful not to parade your uprightness in public to attract attention; otherwise you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven.” The justice referred to by Jesus is the place where God wants us to be. The way there is found in the Law of God. Jesus warns that it is not enough to observe the law so as to be praised by people. Earlier He had said, “For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5: 26). In reading these words we must not only think of the Pharisees of Jesus time, but above all of the Pharisee that is dormant in each one of us. Had Joseph, Mary’s spouse, followed the justice of the law of the Pharisees, he would have had to renounce Mary. But he was just (Mt 1: 19), and already possessed the new justice proclaimed by Jesus. That is why he broke the ancient law and saved Mary’s and Jesus’ lives. The new justice proclaimed by Jesus rests on another foundation, springs from another source. We must build our peace from the inside, not in what we do for God, but in what God does for us. This is the general key to an understanding of the teaching of Jesus on the works of mercy. In what follows, Matthew applies this general principle to the practice of almsgiving, prayer and fasting. Didactically, he first expresses what must not be and then immediately teaches what should be.

- Matthew 6:2: How Not to Go about Almsgiving

  The wrong way of giving alms, then and now, is that of doing it in public so as to be acknowledged and acclaimed by others. We often see on pews of churches the words: Gift of such-and-such a family. On television, politicians love to appear as great benefactors of humanity on occasions of inaugurations of public works at the service of the community. Jesus says,

"Those who act thus have already had their reward." Matthew 6: 3-4: How to go about almsgiving

The correct way of giving alms is this: Your left hand must not know what your right hand is doing! In other words, we must give alms in such a way that not even I must feel that I am doing something good that deserves a reward from God and praise from others. Almsgiving is an obligation. It is a way of sharing something that I have with those who have nothing. In a family, what belongs to one belongs to all. Jesus praises the example of the widow who gave of what was needed for herself (Mk 12: 44).

- Matthew 6: 5: How Not to Pray

  Speaking of the wrong way of praying, Jesus mentions some strange practices and customs of His day. When the trumpet sounded for morning, midday and evening prayer, there were those who sought to be in the middle of the road to pray solemnly with arms outstretched so as to be seen by all and thus be considered as pious people. Others took up extravagant poses in the synagogue so as to draw the attention of the community.

- Matthew 6: 6: How to Pray

  So as to leave no doubt, Jesus over-emphasizes the manner of praying. He says that we must pray in secret, only before God the Father. No one will see you. Maybe before others you may even seem to be a person who does not pray. This does not matter! Even of Jesus it was said, "He is not God!" That is because Jesus often prayed at night and did not care what others thought. What matters is to have one's conscience at peace and to know that God is the Father who welcomes me, not because of what I do for God or because of the satisfaction that I seek in the eyes of others, who appreciate me as one who is pious and prays.

- Matthew 6: 16: How Not to Fast

  Jesus criticizes wrong practices concerning fasting. There were those who bore a sad face, did not wash, wore torn clothes, did not comb their hair, so that all could see that they were fasting in a perfect manner.

- Matthew 6: 17-18: How to Fast

  Jesus suggests the opposite: When you fast, put scent on your head, wash your face, so that no one may know that you are fasting, only Your Father who is in heaven.

  As we said earlier, it is a new manner of accessing the heart of God that is opening before our eyes. For our own interior peace, Jesus does not ask what we do for God, but what God does for us. Almsgiving, prayer and fasting are not currency to buy God's favor, but are our response of gratitude for the love received and experienced.

Further Information:

The Broader Context of Matthew's Gospel

Matthew's Gospel was written for a community of converted Jews who were experiencing a deep crisis of identity in relation to their past. After their conversion to Jesus, they continued to live according to their old traditions and frequented the synagogue, together with their relatives and friends, just as before. But they suffered because of the strong pressure from their Jewish friends who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. This tension grew after the year 70 AD. When in 66 AD the revolt of the Jews against Rome broke out, two groups refused to take part, the Pharisees and the Jewish Christians. Both groups held that going against Rome had nothing to do with the coming of the Messiah, as some thought. After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 70, all the other Jewish groups disappeared. Only the Pharisees and the Jewish Christians remained. Both groups claimed to be the heirs of the promise of the prophets and, thus, the tension grew between brothers, because of the inheritance. The Pharisees reorganized the rest of the people and took an ever-stronger position against the Christians, who ended by being excommunicated from the synagogues. This excommunication rekindled the whole problem of identity. Now the Christians were officially and formally separated from the people of the promise. They could no longer frequent their synagogue, their rabbis. And they asked themselves, "Who are the real people of God: they or us? On whose side is God? Is Jesus really the Messiah?"
Thus, Matthew writes his Gospel (1) for this group of Christians, as a Gospel of consolation for those who had been excommunicated and persecuted by the Jews, helping them to overcome the trauma of breaking away; (2) as a Gospel of revelation, showing that Jesus is the true Messiah, the new Moses, who fulfills the promises; (3) as a Gospel of the new practice, showing how they must achieve true justice, greater than the justice of the Pharisees.

A Key to the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five sermons in Matthew's Gospel. It describes the conditions that will allow a person to enter the Kingdom of God: the way in, the new reading of the law, the new way of looking at and practicing the works of mercy; the new way of living in community. In a word, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus communicates the new way of looking at the things of Life and the Kingdom. The following is a division that serves as a key to reading:

- Mt 5: 1-16: The way in
- Mt 5 :1-10: The eight Beatitudes help us to see where the kingdom is already present (among the poor and persecuted) and where it will be soon (among the other six groups). Mt 5: 12-16: Jesus addresses His words of consolation to His disciples and warns that anyone who lives the beatitudes will be persecuted (Mt 5: 11-12), but his or her life will have meaning because he/she will be the salt of the earth (Mt 5: 13) and the light of the world (Mt 5: 14-16).
- Mt 5: 17 to 6: 1 8: The new relationship with God: A new Justice
- Mt 5: 17-48: The new justice must be greater than that of the Pharisees

Jesus radicalizes the law, that is, He brings it back to its roots, to its main and ultimate purpose which is to serve life, justice, love, and truth. The commandments of the law point to a new way of life, avoided by the Pharisees (Mt 5: 17-20).

Jesus immediately presents various examples as to how the commandments of the Law of God given to Moses are to be understood: "of old it was said, but I say to you" (Mt 5: 21-48)

- Mt 6: 1-18: The new justice must not seek reward or merit (This is the Gospel of this Ash Wednesday).
- Mt 6: 19-34: The new relationship to the goods of this world: a new vision of creation Jesus comes to grips with the primary needs of life: food, clothing, house, and health. This is the part of life that causes most anxiety in people. Jesus teaches how to relate to material goods and to the riches of the world: do not accumulate goods (Mt 6: 19-21); do not look at the world with sad eyes (Mt 6: 22-23); do not serve God and money at the same time (Mt 6:24); do not worry about food and drink (Mt 6: 23-34).
- Mt 7: 1-29: The new relationship with people: a new life in community

  Do not seek the straw in your brother's eye (Mt 7: 1-5); do not cast pearls before swine (Mt 7: 6); Do not be afraid of asking for things from God (Mt 7: 7-11); observe the golden rule (Mt 7: 12); seek the narrow and difficult path (Mt 7: 13-14); be wary of false prophets (Mt 7: 15-20); do not just talk but do (Mt 7: 21-23); the community built on these principles will stand in spite of raging storms (Mt 7: 24-27). The outcome of these words is a new awareness in the face of the scribes and doctors (Mt 7: 28-29).

Prayer in a Psalm: Psalm 40 (39)

Proclaiming the great justice of God I waited, I waited for Yahweh, then He stooped to me and heard my cry for help. He pulled me up from the seething chasm, from the mud of the mire. He set my feet on rock, and made my footsteps firm.
He put a fresh song in my mouth, praise of our God.
Many will be awestruck at the sight, and will put their trust in Yahweh.
How blessed are those who put their trust in Yahweh, who have not sided with rebels and those who have gone astray in falsehood. How much You have done, Yahweh, my God Your wonders, Your plans for us -- You have no equal. I will proclaim and speak of them; they are beyond number.
You wanted no sacrifice or cereal offering, but You gave me an open ear, You did not ask for burnt offering or sacrifice for sin; then I said, "Here I am, I am coming."
In the scroll of the book it is written of me, my delight is to do Your will; Your law, my God, is deep in my heart.
I proclaimed the saving justice of Yahweh in the great assembly. See, I will not hold my tongue, as You well know.

I have not kept Your saving justice locked in the depths of my heart, but have spoken of Your constancy and saving help.
I have made no secret of Your faithful and steadfast love, in the great assembly.
You, Yahweh, have not withheld Your tenderness from me; Your faithful and steadfast love will always guard me.
For troubles surround me, until they are beyond number; my sins have overtaken me; I cannot see my way.
They outnumber the hairs of my head, and my heart fails me.
Be pleased, Yahweh, to rescue me, Yahweh, come quickly and help me!
Shame and dismay to all who seek to take my life. Back with them, let them be humiliated who delight in my misfortunes. Let them be aghast with shame, those who say to me, “Aha, aha!”
But joy and happiness in You to all who seek You! Let them ceaselessly cry, “Great is Yahweh” who love Your saving power. Poor and needy as I am, the Lord has me in mind.
You, my helper, my Savior, my God, do not delay.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May Your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice what Your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, Your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Thursday, February 19, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
You love us and You invite us to share in Your own life and joy, through a personal decision.
Help us to choose You and life and to remain ever loyal to this basic option by the power of Jesus Christ, Your Son, who was loyal to You and to us, now and forever.

Gospel Reading - Luke 9: 22-25

Jesus said to his disciples: "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"

Reflection

Yesterday we entered into the season of Lent. Up until now the daily Liturgy followed the Gospel of Mark, step by step. Beginning yesterday until Easter, the sequence of the readings of the day will be dictated by the ancient tradition of Lent and of preparation for Easter. From the very first day, the perspective is that of the Passion, Death and Resurrection and of the meaning which this mystery has for our life. This is what is proposed in the rather brief text of today's Gospel. The text speaks of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus and affirms that the following of Jesus presupposes that we carry our cross after Jesus.

Before, in Luke 9: 18-21, Jesus asks, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They answered giving different opinions: John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the ancient prophets. After having heard the opinions of others, Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answers, "The Christ of God!" that is, the Lord is the one awaited by the people! Jesus agrees with Peter, but He orders and charges them not to say this to anyone. Why did Jesus forbid this? Because at that time everybody was expecting the Messiah, but each one according to his own mind: some as king, others as priest, doctor, warrior, judge or prophet! Jesus thinks in a different way. He identifies Himself with the Messiah, servant and suffering, announced by Isaiah (42: 1-9; 52: 13-53: 12)

The first announcement of the Passion. Jesus begins to teach that He is the Messiah, the Servant and affirms that, as Messiah, the Servant announced by Isaiah, soon He will be put to death in the carrying out of His mission of justice (Is 49: 4-9; 53: 1-12). Luke usually follows the Gospel of Mark, but here he omits the reaction of Peter, who advised Jesus against or tried to dissuade Him from thinking of the suffering Messiah and he also omits the hard response: "Far from me, Satan! Because you do not think as God, but as men!" Satan is a Hebrew word which means accuser, the one who draws others far away from the path of God. Jesus does not allow Peter to get Him away from His mission.

Conditions to follow Jesus. Jesus draws conclusions valid even until now: "If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross every day and follow Me." At that time the cross was the death penalty which the Roman Empire gave to marginalized criminals. To take up the cross and to carry it following Jesus was the same as accepting to be marginalized by the unjust system which legitimized injustices. It was the same as to break away from the system. As St. Paul says in the letter to the Galatians, "The world has been crucified for Me and I to the world" (Gal 6: 14). The cross is not fatalism, neither is it an exigency from the Father. The Cross is the consequence of the commitment freely assumed by Jesus to reveal the Good News that God is Father, and that, therefore, we all should be accepted and treated as brothers and sisters. Because of this revolutionary announcement, He was persecuted and He was not afraid to deliver His own life. There is no greater proof of love than to give one's life for one's brother or sister.

Personal Questions

- Everybody was waiting for the Messiah, each one in his/her own way. Which is the Messiah whom I await and whom people today await?
- The condition to follow Jesus is the cross. How do I react before the crosses of life?

Concluding Prayer

How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread, nor a seat in company with cynics, but who delights in the law of Yahweh and murmurs His law day and night. (Ps 1: 1-2)

Friday, February 20, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

Lord of the Covenant,
we have not to fear Your judgment if like You we become rich in mercy and full of compassion for our neighbor. May we not only know that You ask us but practice with sincere hearts to share our food with the hungry and to loosen the bonds of injustice, that through us Your light may shine and Your healing spread far and wide. Be with us in Your goodness.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 9: 14-15

The disciples of John approached Jesus and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

Reflection

Today's Gospel is a brief version of the Gospel which we already meditated on in January, when the same theme of fasting was proposed to us (Mk 2: 18-22), but there is a small difference. Today, the Liturgy omits the whole discourse of the new piece of cloth on an old cloak and the new wine in an old skin (Mt 9: 16-17) and concentrates its attention on fasting.
Jesus does not insist on the practice of fasting. Fasting is a very ancient practice and done in almost all religions. Jesus Himself practiced it during the forty days (Mt 4:2). But He did not insist His disciples do the same. He leaves them free. For this reason, the disciples of John the Baptist and of the Pharisees, who were obliged to fast, want to know why Jesus does not insist on fasting.
While the bridegroom is with them, they do not need to fast. Jesus responds with a comparison. When the bridegroom is with the friends of the spouse, that

is, during the wedding feast, it is not necessary for them to fast. Jesus considers Himself the spouse. The disciples are the friends of the spouse. The time which Jesus is with the disciples is the wedding feast. The day will come in which the spouse will no longer be there. Then, they can fast if they so desire. In this phrase Jesus refers to His death. He knows and He becomes aware that if He continues along this path of freedom the religious authority will want to kill Him.
Fasting and abstinence from meat are universal practices. The Muslims have fasting during Ramadan, during which they don't eat until the rising of the sun. For diverse reasons, people impose upon themselves some form of fasting. Fasting is an important means to control oneself and this exists in almost all religions. It is also appreciated by those who are health conscious.
The Bible has many references to fasting. It was a way of making penance and of attaining conversion. Through the practice of fasting, Christians imitated Jesus who fasted during forty days. Fasting helps to attain the freedom of mind, self-control, and perhaps a critical vision of reality. It is an instrument to free our mind and not allow one to be transported by any breeze. It is a means to take better care of health. Fasting can be a form of identification with the poor who are obliged to fast the whole year and eat meat very rarely. There are also those who fast in order to protest.
Even if fasting and abstinence are no longer observed today, the basic objective of this practice continues to remain unchanged and is a force which should animate our life: to participate in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. Surrender one's own life in order to be able to possess it in God. Become aware or conscious of the fact that the commitment to the Gospel is a one way journey, without returning, which demands losing one's life in order to be able to possess and find all things in full liberty.

Personal Questions

- What form of fasting do you practice? And if you do not practice any, what is the form which you could practice?
- How can fasting help me to better prepare for the celebration of Easter?

Concluding Prayer

Have mercy on me, O God, in Your faithful love, in Your great tenderness wipe away my offenses; wash me clean from my guilt, purify me from my sin. (Ps 51: 1-2)

Saturday, February 21, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God, merciful Father, when You call us to repentance, you want us to turn to people and to build up peace and justice among us all. According to Your promise, let us become, with Your strength, lights for those in darkness, water for those who thirst, re-builders of hope and happiness for all.
May we thus become living signs of Your love and loyalty, for You are our God for ever.

Gospel Reading – Luke. 5: 27-32

Jesus saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him. Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."

Reflection

Today's Gospel presents the same theme which we reflected upon in January in the Gospel of Mark (Mk 2: 13-17). This time, it is only the Gospel of Luke which speaks and the text is much shorter, concentrating its attention on the principal supper which is the call and conversion of Levi, and what the conversion implies for us who are entering into the time of Lent.
Jesus calls a sinner to be His disciple. Jesus calls Levi, a tax collector, and he immediately left everything, follows Jesus, and begins to form part of the group of the disciples. Luke says that Levi had prepared a great banquet in his house. In the Gospel of Mark, it seemed that the banquet was in Jesus' house. What is important here is the insistence on the communion of Jesus with sinners, around the table, which was a forbidden thing.
Jesus did not come for the just, but for sinners. This gesture of Jesus causes great anger among the religious authorities. It was forbidden to sit at table with tax collectors and sinners, because to sit at table with someone meant to treat him as a brother! With His way of doing things, Jesus was accepting the excluded and was treating them as brothers of the same family of God. Instead of speaking directly with Jesus, the of the Pharisees speak with the disciples: Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners? Jesus answers: It is not those that are well who need the doctor; I have come to call not the upright, but sinners, to repentance! His consciousness of His mission helps Jesus to find the response to indicate the way for the announcement of the Good News of God. He has come to unite the dispersed people, to reintegrate those who are excluded, to reveal that God is not a severe judge who condemns and expels, but rather He is Father who accepts and embraces.

Personal Questions

- Jesus accepts and includes people. What is my way of accepting people?

- Jesus' gesture reveals the experience that He has of God the Father. What is the image of God which I bear and express to others through my behavior?

Concluding Prayer

Listen to me, Yahweh, answer me, for I am poor and needy.
Guard me, for I am faithful, save Your servant who relies on You. (Ps 86: 1-2)

Sunday, February 22, 2026

First Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us read the Bible as You read it to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word written in the Bible, You helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of Your sentence and death. Thus, the cross, which seemed to signal the end of all hope, appeared to them as source of life and resurrection.
Create silence in us that we may listen to Your voice in Creation and in Scripture, in events and people, above all in the poor and the suffering. May Your word guide us so that we too, like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, may experience the force of Your resurrection and witness to others that You are alive in our midst as source of brotherhood and sisterhood, of justice and peace. We ask this of You, Jesus, son of Mary, who have revealed the Father and sent Your Spirit. Amen

Reading

A Key to the Reading:

Let us read this text describing the temptations of Jesus, temptations that are also those of all human beings. While reading this text we should pay attention to the following: what are the temptations, where do they take place, and how does Jesus deal with them?

A Division of the Text to Help with the Reading:

- Mt 4: 1-2: The situation where and whence the temptation arises: desert, spirit, fast and hunger
- Mt 4: 3-4: The temptation concerning bread.
- Mt 4: 5-7: The temptation concerning prestige.
- Mt 4: 8-11: The temptation concerning power.

The Text:

1-2 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward He was hungry.
3-4 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But He answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"
5-7 Then the devil took Him to the holy city, and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

8-11 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to Him, "All these I will give You, if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

A Time of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may enter into our hearts and enlighten our lives.

Some Questions

to help us meditate and pray.

- What were the temptations? What is the connection between the Spirit, the desert, the fast and hunger and the temptation of Jesus?
- What does the word temptation suggest to us today? How does it affect me in my daily life?
- The tempter or Satan is he what takes me away from or makes me deviate from God's path. It may be that I have already been Satan for someone, just like Peter was for Jesus.
- The Spirit leads Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil. This calls to mind the temptations of the people in the desert after the exodus from Egypt. What does Matthew wish to suggest and teach through this reminder of the temptations of the people in the desert?
- The devil uses the Bible to tempt Jesus. Jesus uses the Bible to overcome temptation! Can the Bible be used for everything? How and for what end do I use the Bible?

- The temptation of the bread. How can we speak of God to those who have all they need? How can we speak of God to those who are hungry?
- The temptation concerning prestige. Prestige from knowledge, from money, from faultless moral conduct, from appearances, from fame, from honor: Do these exist in my life?
- The temptation concerning power. Wherever two people meet, a relationship of power comes into play. How do I use the power that comes my way: in my family, in the community, in society, in my neighborhood? Do I give in to the temptation?

A Key to the Reading

for those who wish to go deeper into the matter.

- Jesus was tempted. Matthew renders the temptations intelligible: temptation of bread, temptation of prestige, temptation of power. These are various forms of messianic hope that, then, existed among the people. The glorious Messiah who, like a new Moses, would feed the people in the desert: "command these stones to turn into bread!" The unknown Messiah who would impose himself on all by means of a spectacular sign in the Temple: "throw yourself from here!" The nationalist Messiah who would come to dominate the world: "All these things I will give to you!"
- In the Old Testament, identical temptations allow the people in the desert to fall after their exodus from Egypt (Deut 6: 3; 6: 16; 6: 13). Jesus repeats history. He resists the temptations and prevents them from perverting God's plan. The tempter or Satan is whatever makes us deviate from God's plan. Peter was Satan for Jesus (Mt 16:23).
- Temptation was always there in the life of Jesus. It went with Him from the beginning to the end, from His baptism to His death on the cross. The more the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom spread in the midst of the people, the greater the pressure on Jesus to adapt Himself to the messianic expectations of the people to be the messiah desired and expected by others: "a glorious and nationalist messiah," "a messiah king," "a messiah high priest," "a messiah judge," "a warrior messiah," "a messiah doctor of the law." The letter to the Hebrews says, "Like us, he was tried in all things, except sin" (Heb 4: 15).
- But temptation never succeeded in distracting Jesus from His mission. He continued firmly on His journey as "The Servant Messiah," as proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah and awaited especially by the poor, the *anawim*. In this, Jesus did not fear-provoking conflicts with the authorities and with those dearest to Him. All those who tried to make Him deviate from his path received hard replies and unexpected reactions:
  - Peter tried to take Him away from the cross: "Far from it, Lord, this will never happen!" (Mt 16: 22). And he heard the reply, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mk 8: 33).

- His relatives, wanted to take Him home. They thought He was mad (Mk 3: 21), but they heard harsh words, which seemed to create a rupture (Mk 3: 33). Then, when Jesus had become famous, they wanted Him to appear more often in public and to remain in Jerusalem, the capital (Jn 7: 3-4). Again, Jesus replies showing that there is a radical difference between his purpose and theirs (Jn 7: 6-7).
- His parents complained: "Son, why have You done so?" (Lk 2: 48). But Jesus replies, "Why were you looking for Me? Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Lk 2: 49).
- The apostles were glad of the publicity Jesus was getting in the midst of the people and wanted Him to turn towards the people. "Everyone is looking for You!" (Mk 1: 37). But they heard the refusal, "Let us go elsewhere, to the neighboring villages and cities, so that I may preach also to them; it is for this that I have come!" (Mk 1: 38).
- John the Baptist wanted to coerce Jesus into being "the strict judge messiah" (Lk 3: 9; Mt 3: 7-12; Mt 11: 3). Jesus reminded John of the prophecies and asked him to compare them to facts, "Go tell John what you have heard and seen!" (Mt 11: 4-6 and Is 29: 18-19; 3: 5-6; 61: 1).
- The people, when they saw the signs of the multiplication of the bread in the desert, concluded, "This surely is the prophet who is to come on earth!" (Jn 6: 14). They got together to urge Jesus to be "the messiah king" (Jn 5: 15), but Jesus took refuge on the mountain to be with the Father in solitude.
- When in prison and at the hour of darkness (Lk 22: 53), the temptation to *be "the warrior messiah" appeared*. But Jesus says, "Put your sword back into its scabbard!" (Mt 26: 52) and "Pray that you may not *enter into temptation" (*Lk 22: 40,45).

- Jesus turned to the Word of God and there found light and nourishment. Above all, it is the prophecy of the Servant, proclaimed by Isaiah (Isa 42: 1-9; 49: 1-6; 50: 3-9; 52: 13-53, 12) that fills Him and motivates Him to go on. At the baptism and in the transfiguration, He receives the Father's confirmation for His journey, His mission. The voice from heaven repeats the words with which Isaiah presents the Servant of Yahweh to the people, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him!" (Mk 1: 11; 9: 6).
- Jesus defines His mission with these words, "The Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life for the redemption of many!" (Mt 20: 28; Mk 10: 45). This lesson He learned from His mother, who said to the angel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word!" (Lk 1: 38). By turning to the Word of God to deepen awareness of His mission and by seeking strength in prayer, Jesus faced temptations. In the midst of the poor, the anawim, and united to His Father, faithful to both, He resisted and followed the way of the Servant Messiah, the way of service to the people (Mt 20: 28).

Psalm 91 (90)

God Our Protector is With Us in Times of Temptation

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."
For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence;
He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you will find refuge;
His faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your habitation, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.
For He will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.
Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows My name.
When he calls to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him.
With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You for Your word, which has made the Father's will clearer to us. May Your Spirit enlighten our actions and give us the strength to follow what Your Word has revealed to us. Like Mary,Your Mother, may we not only listen to the Word but also put it into practice. Who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Monday, February 23, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

Lord, holy God, loving Father,
you give us the task to love one another because You are holy and You have loved us before we could love You.
Give us the ability to recognize Your Son in our brothers and sisters far and near.
Make us witnesses that love exists and is alive and that You, the God of love, exist and are alive now forever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 25: 31-46

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'

And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.'

Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Reflection

The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as the New Messiah. Like Moses, Jesus also promulgates the Law of God. As with the ancient law, the new one, given by Jesus, also contains five books or discourses. The Sermon on the Mountain (Mt 5: 1 to 7: 27), the first discourse, opens with eight Beatitudes. The discourse on vigilance (Mt 2: 4, 1 to 25, 46), the fifth discourse, contains the description of the Last Judgment. The Beatitudes describe the door of entrance into the Kingdom, enumerating eight categories of people: the poor in spirit, the meek, the afflicted, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers and the persecuted because of justice (Mt 5: 3-10). The parable of the Last Judgment tells us what we should do in order to possess the

Kingdom: accept the hungry, the thirsty, the foreigners, the naked, the sick and the prisoners (Mt 25: 35-36): At the beginning, as well as at the end of the New Law, there are the excluded and the marginalized.

- Matthew 25: 31-33: Opening of the Last Judgment. The Son of Man gathers together around Him the nations of the world. He separates people as the shepherd does with the sheep and the goats. The shepherd knows how to discern. He does not make a mistake; sheep on the right, goats on the left. Jesus does not make a mistake. Jesus does not judge nor condemn. (cfr. Jn 3: 17; 12: 47). He does not separate alone. It is the person himself/herself who judges and condemns because of the way in which he/she behaves toward the little ones and the excluded.
- Matthew 25: 34-36: The sentence for those who are at the right hand of the Judge. Those who are at the right hand of the judge are called Blessed of my Father! That is, they receive the blessing which God promised to Abraham and to his descendants (Gen 12: 3). They are invited to take possession of the Kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The reason for the sentence is the following: I was hungry, a foreigner, naked, sick and prisoner, and you accepted me and helped me! This sentence makes us understand who are the sheep. They are the persons who accepted the Judge when he was hungry, thirsty, a foreigner, naked, sick and prisoner. Because of the way of speaking about my Father and the Son of Man, we can know that the Judge is precisely Jesus Himself. He identifies Himself with the little ones!
- Matthew 25: 37-40: A request for clarification and the response of the Judge: Those who accept the excluded are called just. That means that the justice of the Kingdom is not attained by observing norms and prescriptions, but rather by accepting those in need. But it is strange that the just do not even know themselves when they accepted Jesus in need. Jesus responds: Every time that you have done this to one of my brothers, you have done it to me. Who are these little brothers of mine? In other passages of the Gospel of Matthew, the expression “my brothers” indicates the disciples (Mt 12: 48-50; 28: 10). This also indicates the members of the community who are more abandoned and neglected who have no place and are not well received (Mt 10: 40). Jesus identifies Himself with them. In the broader context of the last parable, the expression “my smallest brothers” is extended and includes all those who have no place in society. It indicates all the poor. The just and the blessed by my Father are all the persons from all nations who accept and welcome others with total gratuity, independently of the fact that they are Christians or not.
- Matthew 25: 41-43: The sentence for those who were at the left-hand side. Those who were on the other side of the Judge are called cursed and they are destined to go to the eternal fire, prepared by the devil and his friends. Jesus uses a symbolic language common at that time to say that these persons will not enter into the Kingdom. And here, also, there is only one reason: they did not accept or welcome Jesus as one who is hungry, thirsty, a foreigner, naked, sick and/or a prisoner. It is not that Jesus prevents them from entering into

the Kingdom, rather it is our way of acting that is our blindness which prevents us from seeing Jesus in the little ones.

- Matthew 25: 44-46: A request for clarification and the response of the Judge. The request for clarification indicates that it is a question of people who have behaved well, people who have their conscience in peace. They are certain to have always practiced what God asked from them. For this reason, they were surprised when the Judge says that they did not accept Him, did not welcome Him. The Judge responds: Every time that you have not done these things to one of my brothers, the little ones, you did not do it to me. It is the omission! They did not do anything extra. They only missed practicing good towards the little ones and the excluded. This is the way the fifth Book of the New Law ends!

In the saints and Church Fathers we have a lot to learn about virtues and vices. It is not enough to just avoid vice, or sin, but to also work toward attaining virtue and virtuous behavior. To do no harm is not the same as to help. This is what we are called to do: to not just avoid doing wrong or harm, but to go out of our way to do good as well.

Personal Questions

- What struck you the most in this parable of the Last Judgment?
- Do I focus my life more on avoiding harm or on doing good for others?
- Stop and think: if the Last Judgment would take place today, would you be on the side of the sheep or on the side of the goats?

Concluding Prayer

The precepts of Yahweh are honest, joy for the heart; the commandment of Yahweh is pure, light for the eyes. (Ps 19: 8)

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

Lord God,
you speak Your mighty word to us, but we cannot hear it
unless it stirs our lives
and is spoken in human terms.
Keep speaking Your word to us, Lord, and open our hearts to it,
that it may bear fruit in us when we do Your will
and carry out what we are sent to do.
We ask You this through Your living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 6: 7-15

Jesus said to his disciples: "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. "This is how you are to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. "If you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions."

Reflection

There are two versions of the Our Father: Luke (Lk 11: 1-4) and Matthew (Mt 6: 7-13). In Luke, the Our Father is shorter. Luke writes for the communities which came from Paganism. In Matthew the Our Father is found in the Discourse on the Mountain, in the part where Jesus orientates the disciples in the practice of the three works of piety: alms (Mt 6: 1-4), prayer (Mt 6: 5-15) and fasting (Mt 6: 16-18). The Our Father forms part of a catechesis for the converted Jews. They were accustomed to pray, but had some vices which Matthew tries to correct.

- Matthew 6: 7-8: The faults to be corrected. Jesus criticizes the people for whom prayer was a repetition of a magic formula, strong words addressed to God to oblige Him to respond to our needs. The acceptance of our prayer by God does not depend on the repetition of words, but on God's goodness, on God who is love and mercy. He wants our good and knows our needs even before we pray to Him.
- Matthew 6: 9a: The first words: Our Father, Abba Father, is the name which Jesus uses to address Himself to God. It reveals the new relationship with God that should characterize the life of the communities (Ga 4: 6; Rm 8: 15). We say Our Father and not My Father. The adjective places the accent on the awareness or knowledge that we all belong to the great human family of all races and creeds. To pray to the Father is to enter in intimacy with Him. It also means to be sensitive to the cry of all the brothers and sisters who cry for their daily bread. It means to seek in the first place the Kingdom of God. The experience of God as our Father is the foundation of universal fraternity. Matthew 6: 9b-10: Three requests for the cause of God: The Name, the Kingdom, the Will. In the first part we ask that our relationship with God may be re-established again. To sanctify His name: The name JAHVE means I am with you! God knows. In this name He makes Himself known (Ex 3: 11-15). The name of God is sanctified when it is used with faith and not with magic; when it is used according to its true objective, not for oppression but for the liberty or freedom of the people and for the construction of the Kingdom. The coming of the Kingdom: The only Lord and King of life is God (Is 45: 21; 46: 9). The coming of the Kingdom is the fulfillment of all the hopes and promises. It is life in plenitude, the overcoming of frustration suffered with human kings

and governments. This Kingdom will come when the Will of God will be fully accomplished. To do His will: The will of God is expressed in His Law. His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. In Heaven the sun and the stars obey the laws of their orbit and create the order of the universe (Is 48: 12-13). The observance of the law of God will be a source of order and well-being for human life.

- Matthew 6: 11-13: Four petitions for the cause of the brothers: Bread, Pardon, Victory, Liberty. In the second part of the Our Father we ask that the relationship among persons may be restored. The four requests show how necessary it is to transform or change the structures of the community and society in order that all the sons and daughters of God may have the same dignity. The daily bread. In Exodus the people received the manna in the desert every day (Ex 16: 35). Divine Providence passed through the fraternal organization, the sharing. Jesus invites us to live a new Exodus, a new fraternal way of living together which will guarantee the daily bread for all (Mt 6: 34-44; Jo 6: 48-51). Forgive us our debts: Every 50 years, the Jubilee Year obliged people to forgive their debts. It was a new beginning (Lv 25: 8-55). Jesus announces a new Jubilee Year, a year of grace from the Lord (Lk 4: 19). The Gospel wants to begin everything anew! Do not lead us into temptation, do not put us to the test: In Exodus, people were tempted and fell (Dt 9: 6-12). The people complained and wanted to go back (Ex 16: 3; 17: 3). In the new Exodus, the temptation will be overcome by the strength which people receive from God (I Co 10: 12-13). Deliver us from evil: The Evil One is Satan, who draws away from God and is a cause of scandal. He succeeds in entering in Peter (Mt 16: 23) and to tempt Jesus in the desert. Jesus overcomes him (Mt 4: 1-11). He tells us: Courage, I have conquered the world! (Jn 16: 33).
- Matthew 6: 14-15: Anyone who does not forgive will not be forgiven. In praying the Our Father, we pronounce the phrase which condemns us or absolves us. We say: Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass us (Mt 6: 12). We offer God the measure of pardon that we want. If we forgive very much, He will forgive us very much. If we forgive little, He will forgive little. If we do not forgive, He will not forgive us.

Personal Questions

Jesus prayer says “forgive our debts.” In some countries it is translated as “forgive our offenses.” What is easier to forgive, the offenses or to forgive the debts?
Christian nations of the Northern Hemisphere (Europe and USA) pray everyday: Forgive our debts as we forgive those who are in debt to us! But they do not forgive the external debt of poor countries of the Third World. How can we explain this terrible contradiction, source of impoverishment of millions of people?
Debt, in the context of society, is not only money. In fact, in referring to people who have served time in jail we say “they have paid their debt to society”. Do we

accept these people back into society? Not only have they paid their “debt”, they are often treated as having not been forgiven.
How do we forgive others in terms of immigration, documented or not, and accept them into our communities?

Concluding Prayer

Proclaim with me the greatness of Yahweh, let us acclaim His name together.
I seek Yahweh and He answers me, frees me from all my fears. (Ps 34: 3-4)

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

Forgiving, merciful God,
we pray to You for a good measure of humility and honesty to acknowledge before You and people that we are weak and fallible men and women, who often try to turn a blind eye to our shortcomings and our sins.
Strong with the grace won in the hard way by Your Son on the cross, we beg You for the courage to seek Your forgiveness and to turn and return wholeheartedly to You and to serve You and people.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Luke 11: 29-32

While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, “This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation, and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here.”

Reflection

We are in Lent. The Liturgy presents texts which can help us to convert ourselves and to change our life. What helps more in conversion are the facts of the history of the People of God. In today’s Gospel, Jesus presents two episodes of the past: Jonah and the Queen of the South and transforms this into a mirror in such a way that one can discover God’s call to conversion.

- Luke 11: 29: The evil generation which asks for a sign. Jesus calls the generation evil because it does not want to believe in Jesus and continues to ask for signs

which can indicate that Jesus has been sent by the Father. But Jesus refuses to present these signs, because if they ask for a sign, it is because they do not believe. The only sign which will be given is that of Jonah.

- Luke 11: 30: The sign of Jonah. The sign of Jonah has two different aspects. The first one is what the text of Luke affirms in today's Gospel. Jonah was a sign, through his preaching, for the people of Nineveh. Listening to Jonah, the people were converted. In the same way, the preaching of Jesus was a sign for His people, but the people did not show any sign of conversion. The other aspect is that which the Gospel of Matthew affirms when he quotes the same episode: For as Jonah remained in the belly of the sea- monster for three days and three nights, so will the Son of man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights (Mt 12: 40). When the fish vomited Jonah into the dry land, he went to announce the Word of God to the people of Nineveh. In the same way, after the death and resurrection on the third day, the Good News will be announced to the people of Judah.
- Luke 11: 31: The Queen of the South. Following this, Jesus recalls the story of the Queen of the South, who came from the ends of the earth to meet Solomon, and to learn from his wisdom (cfr. I Kg 10: 1-10). Twice Jesus affirms: Look, there is something greater than Solomon here, and look, there is something much greater than Jonah here.

  A very important point in the discussion between Jesus and the leaders of His people is the way in which Jesus and His enemies place themselves before God. The Book of Jonah is a parable which criticizes the mentality of those who wanted God only for the Jews. In the story of Jonah, the pagans were converted listening to the preaching of Jonah and God accepts them in His goodness and does not destroy the city. When Jonah sees that God accepts the people of Nineveh and does not destroy the city Jonah became very indignant. He fell into a rage. He prayed to the Lord: Lord, is not this what I said would happen when I was still in my own country? That was why I first tried to flee to Tarshish, since I knew You were a tender, compassionate God, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, who relents about inflicting disaster. So now, Lord, please take my life, for I might as well be dead as go on living!. (Jon 4: 1-3). For this reason, Jonah was a sign for the Jews of the time of Jesus and it continues to be for us Christians. He wants for all to be disciples (Mt 28: 19), that is, that they be persons who, like Him, radiate and announce the Good News of the love of God for all peoples (Mk 16: 15).

Personal Questions

- Lent, the time for conversion. What has to change in the image of God that I have? Am I like Jonah or like Jesus?
- On what is my faith based, founded? In signs or in the Word of Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

God, create in me a clean heart, renew within me a resolute spirit, do not thrust me away from Your presence, do not take away from me Your spirit of holiness. (Ps 51: 10-11)

Thursday, February 26, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

Lord, our God,
You are a generous Father, who give us what is good for us simply because You love us.
Give us grateful hearts, Lord, that we may learn from You to give and share without counting the costbut simply with love and joy, as Jesus, Your Son, did among us, who lives with You and the Holy Spirit forever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 7: 7-12

Jesus said to his disciples: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asked for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets."

Reflection

The Gospel today gives a part of the Sermon on the Mount, the new law of God which has been revealed to us by Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount has the following structure.

- Mathew 5: 1-16 - The entrance door: the Beatitudes (Mt 5: 1-10) and the mission of the disciples: to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt 5: 12-16).
- Mathew 5: 17-18 - The new relationship with God: The new justice (Mt 5: 17-48) which does not expect a reward for practicing almsgiving, for praying and fasting (Mt 6: 1-18).
- Mathew 6: 19-34 - The new relationship with the goods of the earth (Mt 6: 19-21), do not look at the world with a jaundiced eye (Mt 6: 22-23), do not serve God and money (Mt 6: 24), do not be concerned about food and drink (Mt 6: 23-34).
- Mathew 7: 1-23 - The new relationship with other people: do not look for the splinter in your brother's eye (Mt 7: 1-5); do not throw your pearls in front of

pigs (Mt 7: 6); the Gospel today: do not be afraid to ask things from God (Mt 7: 7-11); and the Golden Rule (Mt 7: 12); choose the hard and narrow roads (Mt 7: 13-14), beware of false prophets (Mt 7: 15-20).

- Mathew 7: 21-29 - Conclusion: do not only speak but also practice (Mt 7: 21-23); the community built on this basis will resist the storm (Mt 7: 24-27). The result of these words is a new conscience before the scribes and the doctors (Mt 7: 28-29).
- Mathew 7: 7-8 - Jesus' three recommendations: to ask, to seek and to knock: "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you!" A person is asked. The response depends both on the person as well as on the insistence with which it is asked (cf Lk 18: 1-7). The seeking is defined by some criteria. The better the criteria, the more certainty one can have of finding what one is looking for. To knock at the door is done with the hope that there will be someone on the other side of the door at home. Jesus completes the recommendation, offering the certainty of the response: "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it will be opened; because anyone who asks receives, and anyone who seeks will find and to anyone who knocks the door will be opened". That means that when we ask God, He listens to our petition. When we seek God, He allows Himself to be found (Isa 5: 5-6). When we knock on the door of God's house, He opens the door for us.
- Mathew 7: 9-11 - Jesus' question to the people. "Is there anyone among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish?" Here appears the simple and direct way which Jesus has for teaching the things of God to the people. Speaking to the parents, He connects Himself to the daily experience. Between the lines of the question one can guess the response the people yelled out: "No!" because nobody gives a stone to a son who asks for bread. There is no father and no mother who would give a snake to their son when he asks for a fish. And Jesus draws the conclusion: "If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" Jesus calls us evil to stress the certainty of being listened to by God when we ask Him for something. And this, because if we who are not saints, know how to give good things to our children, how much more is the Father in heaven. This comparison has as its objective to take away from our heart any doubt concerning the prayer addressed to God with trust. God will listen! Luke adds that God will give the Holy Spirit (Lk 11: 13).
- Mathew 7: 12 - The Golden Rule. "So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the law and the prophets." This is the summary of the entire Old Testament, of the law and the prophets. And this is the summary of everything which God wants to tell us, the summary of all the teaching of Jesus. This Golden Rule is not found only in the teaching of Jesus, but also, in one way or other, in all religions. This responds to the most profound and more universal sentiment of humanity.

Personal Questions

• Ask, seek, knock on the door: How do you pray and speak with God?

• Are you persistent in what you ask for, as the widow in Lk 18: 1-7 was, or do you give up after not getting results immediately? Would you pray persistently (and insistently) for years, or just months, or just a week?

• How are your wants aligned with what God would want for you?

• How do you live the Golden Rule?

Concluding Prayer

Lord I praise Your name for Your faithful love and Your constancy;
Your promises surpass even Your fame.
You heard me on the day when I called,
and You gave new strength to my heart. (Ps 138: 2-3)

Friday, February 27, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

God of mercy and compassion, you challenge us to be responsible for the good and the evil we do and You call us to conversion.
God, help us to face ourselves that we may not use flimsy excuses for covering up our wrongs.
Make us honest with ourselves, and aware that we can always count on Jesus Christ to be our guide and strength on the road to You, now and forever.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 5: 20-26

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven. "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, *raqa*, will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise, your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will

be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny."

Reflection

- The text of today s Gospel forms part of a broader or more extensive whole: Mt 5: 20 up to Mt 5: 48. In these passages Matthew tells us how Jesus interprets and explains the Law of God. Five times He repeats the phrase: You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, in truth I tell you! (Mt 5: 21, 27, 33, 38, 43). Before, He had said: Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; no, I have come not to abolish, but to complete them (Mt 5: 17). The attitude of Jesus before the Law is, at the same time, one of breaking and of continuity. He breaks away from the erroneous interpretations but maintains firm the objective which the Law should attain: the practice of a greater justice, which is Love.
- Matthew 5: 20: An uprightness which surpasses that of the Pharisees. This first verse presents the general key of everything which follows in Matthew 5: 20-48. The word Justice never appears in the Gospel of Mark, and it appears seven times in that of Matthew (Mt 3: 15; 5: 6,10, 20; 6: 1, 33; 21: 32). This has something to do with the situation of the communities for which Mark wrote. The religious ideal of the Jews of the time was to be just before God. The Pharisees taught: people attain justice before God when they succeed to observe all the norms of the law in all its details! This teaching generated a legalistic oppression and caused great anguish in the people because it was very difficult to be able to observe all the norms (cfr. Rm 7: 21-24). This is why Matthew takes the words of Jesus on justice to show that it has to surpass the justice of the Pharisees (Mt. 5: 20). According to Jesus, justice does not come from what I do for God in observing the law, but rather from what God does for me, accepting me as His son or as His daughter. The new ideal which Jesus proposes is the following: therefore, be perfect as is your Heavenly Father! (Mt 5: 48). That means: you will be just before God when you try to accept and forgive people as God accepts and pardons me, in spite of my defects and sins.

  By means of these five very concrete examples, Jesus shows us what to do in order to attain this greater justice which surpasses the justice of the and the Pharisees. As we can see, today's Gospel takes the example of the new interpretation of the fifth commandment: You shall not kill! Jesus has revealed what God wanted when He gave this commandment to Moses.

- Matthew 5: 21-22: The law says: You shall not kill! (Ex 20:13). In order to observe fully this commandment, it is not sufficient to avoid murdering. It is necessary to uproot from within everything which, in one way or another, can lead to murder, for example, anger, hatred, the desire to revenge, insult, and exploitation, etc.
- Matthew 5: 23-24. The perfect worship which God wants. In order to be accepted by God and to remain united to Him, it is necessary to reconcile

oneself with brother and sister. Before the destruction of the Temple, in the year 70, when the Christian Jews participated in the pilgrimages in Jerusalem to present their offerings at the altar and to pay their promises, they always remembered this phrase of Jesus. In the year 80, at the time when Matthew wrote, the Temple and the Altar no longer existed. They had been destroyed by the Romans. The community and the communitarian celebration became the Temple and the Altar of God.

- Matthew 5: 25-26: To reconcile oneself. One of the points on which the Gospel of Matthew exists the most is reconciliation. That indicates that in the communities of that time, there were many tensions among the radical groups with diverse tendencies and sometimes even opposing ones. Nobody wanted to cede to the other. There was no dialogue. Matthew enlightens this situation with the words of Jesus on reconciliation which demands acceptance and understanding. The only sin that God does not forgive is our lack of pardon toward others (Mt 6: 14). That is why one should try to reconcile yourself before it is too late!

Personal Questions

- Today there are many people who cry out for justice! What meaning does evangelical justice have for me?
- How do I behave before those who do not accept me as I am? How did Jesus behave before those who did not accept Him?

Concluding Prayer

From the depths I call to You, Yahweh: Lord, hear my cry. Listen attentively to the sound of my pleading! (Ps 130: 1-2)

Saturday, February 28, 2026

Season of Lent

Opening Prayer

Lord God, from You comes the initiative of love. You seek us out and You tell us: I am your God; you are my people. You love us in Jesus Christ, Your Son. God, may our response of love go far beyond the demands of any law. May we seek You and commune with You in the deepest of our being and may we express our gratitude to You by going to our neighbor with a love that is spontaneous like Yours. We ask You this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 5: 43-48

Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers and sisters only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Reflection

In today's Gospel we see how Jesus has interpreted the commandment "You shall not kill" in such a way that its observance leads to the practice of love. Besides saying "You shall not kill" (Mt 5: 21), Jesus quoted four other commandments of the ancient law: you shall not commit adultery (Mt 5: 27), you shall not bear false witness (Mt 5: 33), eye for eye, and tooth for tooth (Mt 5: 38) and, in today s Gospel, you shall love your neighbor and will hate your enemy (Mt 5: 43), five times, Jesus criticizes and completes the ancient way of observing these commandments and indicates the new way to attain the objective of the law, which is the practice of love (Mt 5: 22-26; 5: 28-32; 5: 34-37; 5: 39-42; 5: 44-48). Love your enemies. In today s Gospel Jesus quotes the ancient law which says: You will love your neighbor and hate your enemy. This text is not found like this in the Old Testament. It is more a question of the mentality of the time, according to which there was no problem if a person hated his enemy. Jesus was not in agreement and says: But I tell you: if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Do not even the gentiles do as much? You must, therefore, set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to His. And Jesus gives us the proof. At the hour of His death He observed that which He preached.
Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing. A soldier takes the wrist of Jesus and places it on the arm of the cross, places a nail and begins to hammer it in. Several times. The blood was flowing down. The body of Jesus contorted with pain. The soldier, a mercenary, ignorant, far from knowing what he was doing, and of what was happening around him, continued to hammer as if it were a piece of the wall of his house and he had to put up a picture. At that moment Jesus prays for the soldier who tortures Him and addresses His prayer to the Father: Father, forgive them! They know not what they are doing! He loved the soldier who killed Him. Even wanting it with all their strength, the lack of humanity did not succeed to kill in Jesus His humanity and love! He will be imprisoned, they will spit on Him, will laugh and make fun of Him, they will make of Him a false king crowning Him with a crown of thorns, they will torture Him, will oblige Him to go through the streets like a criminal hearing the insults of the religious authority. On Calvary they will leave Him completely naked in the sight of all. But the poison of this lack of humanity did not succeed in suppressing the source of love and humanity which sprang from within Jesus. The water of the love which sprang from within was stronger than the poison of hatred which was coming from without. Looking at that soldier, Jesus felt sorrow

and prayed for him and for all: Father, forgive them! They know not what they are doing! Jesus, in solidarity, almost excuses those who were ill-treating and torturing Him. He was like a brother who goes with his murderous brothers before the judge and he, the victim of his own brothers, says to the judge: They are my brothers, you know they are ignorant. Forgive them! They will become better! He loved the enemy!
Be perfect as is your Father who is in Heaven. Jesus does not want to frighten, because this would be useless. He wants to change the system of human living altogether. The notion which He constructs comes from the new experience He has from God the Father, full of tenderness and who accepts all! The words of threat against the rich cannot be an occasion of revenge on the part of the poor. Jesus orders that we have a contrary attitude: Love your enemies! True love cannot depend on what one receives from others. Love should want the good of others independently of what they do for me. This is the way God s love is for us.

Personal Questions

- Am I capable to love my enemies?
- Contemplate Jesus, in silence, who at the hour of His death, loved the enemy who killed Him.

Concluding Prayer

How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of Yahweh! Blessed are those who observe His instructions, who seek Him with all their hearts (Ps 119: 1-2)