

My Daily V

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Readings and Reflections for Every Day



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Act of faith

O my God! I believe that You are one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe all truths which the Catholic Church teaches because You have revealed them, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Act of hope

O my God! I hope to obtain pardon for my sins and life everlasting through the merits of Jesus Christ.

Act of love

O my God! I love you above all things because You are worthy of all my love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of You.

Act of contrition

O my God! I am sorry for having offended you. I resolve, with the help of Your grace to confess my sins, do penance and amend my life.

Start the day with the Morning Offering. At night examine your conscience, beg God's forgiveness and thank Him for the blessings of the past 24 hours. Say the Our Father, Hail Mary and The Apostles' Creed, morning and night. In time of temptation say "Jesus, Mary and Joseph help me." Make the Rosary your daily family prayer.

My Daily Visitor

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May / June 1987

Volume 31 / Number 3

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About our guest editors

Father Clifford Stevens / May's guest editor, Father Clifford Stevens, is a prolific writer and author of many books, including "The Blessed Virgin" and "A Life of Christ." (OSV Pub.) After enjoying 28 years as a parish priest, Father Stevens became the founder of Tintern Monastery, a totally cloistered, contemplative monastery for priests. Still in its beginning stages, Tintern will be the first contemplative monastery ever to originate in the U.S.

Sister Mary Eileen Foley / June's guest editor, Sister Mary Eileen Foley is a Sister of the Good Shepherd. Most of her life has been spent as a principal and teacher of special-needs teenage girls at Madonna Hall. Sister has also taught at Aquinas Junior College in Milton, Mass. She has been taking advanced biblical studies at Assumption College, Worcester, Mass. and is teaching a parish Scripture class. Sister has been published in numerous newspapers and periodicals.

Apostleship of Prayer Intentions

May / The ongoing application of the Second Vatican Council, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church

June / Spreading the spirit of the Redemption

Lord, give success to the work of our hands — Ps 90:17. Mass readings: Acts 5:34-42 / Jn 6:1-15 or Gn 1:26—2:3 or Col 3:14-15, 17, 23-24 / Mt 13:54-58

A family / May, the month of Mary opens with this feast of Saint Joseph, who, after Jesus, was closer to the Mother of God than any other human being. Her name and glory are summed up in the title: “Theotokos,” God-bearer, or Mother of God. She was a real person who lived in a definite time and place, surrounded by real people and bound up with the ordinary events of a small town.

We can forget the human and historical background, but we must not. Mary walked the earth as we do and breathed the same air that we breathe, and the little boy who ran through her house and played in her front yard, was God Himself. It is in this Mystery that she is wrapped, an amazing, marvelous Mystery that is too deep for words and too ponderous to fathom.

Prayer for the day / “Hail, height untrodden by the thought of men; Hail depth unscanned by angel’s ken; Hail, keeper of things best kept by silence.”

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you — Ps 33:22. Mass readings: Acts 6:1-7 / Jn 6:16-21

Mystery / Mary, of all the figures of the Gospels, is bound up with the wonder of the birth of Jesus, when the Creator stepped into His creation, God became a human being, the Maker of the universe became a little child.

Jesus is God, and so the Mystery of the Incarnation is the most tremendous thing that has ever happened. Of all the works of God, this is the most astonishing. In the silence and wonder of that shepherd's cave, a Child was born; a Child who was truly a human child, but who was just as truly God. That is what we believe, that is what we celebrate; that is why Mary is called "Theotokos," the Mother of God. By that role and that title, she is locked in an incredible closeness to the singular event of the Incarnation and the singular person of Jesus. The Mystery deepens the more it is pondered.

Prayer for the day / "O Mother, whom all must hymn; O you who brought forth the Word most holy, heed us while we pray and look down upon our mortal storm."

Lord, you will show us the path of life — Ps 16:11.

Mass readings: Acts 2:14, 22-28 / 1 Pt 1:17-21 / Lk 24:13-35

Questions / We see Mary when the Mystery of Christmas has been accomplished, almost like a figure in an old icon, overpowered by the awe of that Birth. Although the mystic presence of angels surrounds the event and the equally mysterious Magi, she is obviously at the center of the drama, a small girl fondling her firstborn, wrapping His frail body in swaddling bands, pondering the Mystery, her mind groping with questions. We must not forget that she was very young, she was far from home, she had just come off the road and she would take to the road again when the terror of Herod's soldiers swept the countryside.

We should not let devotional images hide from us a young girl's terror and perplexity at these shocking events. She came and went in the night, the shepherds and the Magi disappearing in the darkness, her mind again groping with questions.

Prayer for the day / "You who fled from Herod's might, deep into the darkest night, holding Him Who is our Light: Lady, intercede for us."

Happy are those of blameless life — Ps 119:1. Mass readings: Acts 6:8-15 / Jn 6:22-29

'Theotokos' / Mary was given the title "Theotokos" at the Council of Ephesus, in the year 431. What the Church emphasizes by this title is the historical reality of the Incarnation itself and of everyone associated with it. The Incarnation did take place; it is not just a pious tale or a mere symbol. Jesus Christ was a true historical person. He was born of the Virgin Mary, and she did give birth to the Son of God made man. If she is not the Mother of God, then Jesus is not God, but simply one of the historical figures born in that century.

The whole Mystery of Jesus, like the whole Mystery of Mary, begins with that statement of the Gospel of Saint John: "the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." It was from Mary that He took human flesh, and so the Christmas story is told anew each year, startling us with the wonder of that birth and stirring us by the marvel of His Person.

Prayer for the day / "Lovely lady, dressed in blue, teach me how to pray; God was just your little boy, tell me what to say."

Into your hands, O Lord, I entrust my spirit — Ps 31:6. Mass readings: Acts 7:51—8:1 / Jn 6:30-35

Model / The connection between Mary's role as God-bearer and her mission to humanity lies deep in the consciousness of Catholics. She was the co-laborer of the Holy Spirit in God's greatest human task: the flesh-taking of God Himself. She is bound up essentially in the very root reason of Redemption. Moreover, in her God-bearing, she was not just a passive instrument. Her whole being bent to His intentions; every human faculty and every divine gift absorbed in this mighty task. She thus becomes the model of all who seek God, as she was a conscious, living instrument of God's will.

She was not only initiated, as were the apostles and prophets, into God's unspeakable counsel, but she wove for Him from her own physical being the physical fibers of His human nature and stood in the presence of that divine mind as it unfolded the deepest drama of human destiny.

Prayer for the day / "Lady, come in haste to the heaving hilly country of our need. Come with hands cupped in the shape of our pain, with feet like silver leaves on the path of our weeping."

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy — Ps 66:1.

Mass readings: Acts 8:1-8 / Jn 6:35-40

Silence / For Mary, the Incarnation was not a dogma, but a living person, a boy with wide inquisitive eyes, flesh of her flesh, and bone of her bone. For more than thirty years, she would stand in the white heat of that Divine Mystery, its brilliance illuminating her every waking hour with a new realization of its shocking reality.

Her Son was God Himself, wrapped up in the person of a little boy, whose every word and action was wrapped up in a huge mystery. Watching Him playing with other boys of Nazareth, or sleeping on His mat, her thoughts must have been deep at the marvel of God in a little boy. We know nothing of their conversations, but they must have given her much for “pondering” and “to store up in her heart.” Silence alone was worthy of the magnitude of that Personality and the wonder of His birth.

Prayer for the day / “We see the Blessed Virgin Mary as a lamp of living light, shining upon those in darkness; she enkindles an unearthly light to lead all to Divine knowledge; she, the radiance that enlightens the mind, is praised by our cry.”

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy — Ps 66:1.

Mass readings: Acts 8:26-40 / Jn 6:44-51

Web of silence / For Mary, the Mystery of God bound up in a little boy was too much for even her innocent mind to fathom. That Boy was God Himself, and His closeness to her was a mystery even she was not able to probe. There was a tremor of something unearthly about His ways, and the sound of His voice in laughter or in play must have opened up vistas of thought to her mind.

The Gospels speak several times of her “pondering” and this must have been noticed by everyone. We are left to guess at the richness of her relationship with her Son and we can only surmise the interaction of those two personalities. She wove around herself a huge web of silence, and even the Evangelists respected the veil she drew over herself, and simply recorded this silence as her most marked characteristic.

Prayer for the day / “My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit leaps with joy in God, my savior.”

Go out to all the world, and tell the Good News —
Mk 16:15. Mass readings: Acts 9:1-20 / Jn 6:52-59

Receptive / God prepared Mary for her role as Mother of God by the Immaculate Conception, one of the key doctrines of the Catholic Faith. He endowed her with all the gifts of nature and grace that would equip her for this momentous mission.

By the Immaculate Conception, she was not only created in grace, with the fullness of the divine life throbbing through her being, but she was made totally receptive to the mind and intentions of God. Goodness was the very essence of her nature; wisdom was an inherent part of her thinking; virtue, understood as the plenitude of her energies directed to God, was fully developed in her character. However, she was not less human for all her divine gifts, in fact, she was more fully human because of them. Her human personality stood out in all its singularity and uniqueness. She was a remarkable human being in her own right, shot through with that intense *caritas* (charity) that is the prerogative of the great saints.

Prayer for the day / “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”

What return can I make to the Lord for all that he gives to me? — Ps 116:12. Mass readings: Acts 9:31-42 / Jn 6:60-69

Divine gifts / The Immaculate Conception is not merely a preservation from the stain of original sin: it is also a preparation for Mary's role as God-bearer. This the early Fathers saw and tried to express in so many poetic ways. Using the imagery of Scripture, they began to describe her holiness in superlative terms, realizing that no words were adequate to express her incomparable closeness to God or the abundance of the divine gifts with which she was endowed as Mother of the Word made flesh.

Her divine motherhood demanded in Mary a holiness completely untouched by sin and radiating with the fullness of the gifts of grace. The Immaculate Conception was the first step in preparing Mary to be the Mother of God. From the first moment of her existence, her whole being throbbed with the fullness of God's life. That alone was fitting for her who was to be the Mother of God.

Prayer for the day / "Keep us, O Lady, in the way of your Son; lift us where we fall and guide our feet home."

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want — Ps 23:1. Mass readings: Acts 2:14, 36-41 / 1 Pt 2:20-25 / Jn 10:1-10

Images of Mary / In the creation of her liturgy, the Church searched the writings of the Old Testament for images of Mary to construct a rich setting for the celebration of her feasts.

The sanctity of the Mother of God is a hidden sanctity, with facets and depths completely hidden from our eyes and from the probing of our minds. But we can get some intimation of her many-sided personality from the poetic constructions that surround her liturgical celebrations. Many of the texts chosen for her feasts are from the Books of Wisdom, and Mary has always been seen as the personification of Wisdom, she who ponders and savors the Word of God and dwells with God in depths of her spirit. She blossoms in the Lord's presence and basks in the sunlight of His face, lifting her mind and her spirit constantly to His devouring splendor.

Prayer for the day / "Mary, Seat of Wisdom, Mother of Good Counsel, Cause of our Joy; pray for us before the Sun of Justice."

My soul is thirsting for the living God — Ps 41:3.

Mass readings: Acts 11:1-18 / Jn 10:11-18

Seat of Wisdom / There is another sense in which Mary is the Seat of Wisdom, when Wisdom is understood as the highest gift of the Holy Spirit, which enables the seeker of God to savor the things of God, to be molded to the Divine likeness by a certain kinship. Wisdom in this sense is the actual tasting of the things of God, a foreshadowing of the possession of God which is eternal life, and the mystic pursuit of His loveliness down all the corridors of creation.

This imagery gives us a theological portrait of Mary, describing her intimate relationship with God, her place in the assembly of God's People, the Church, and her role in the lives of the children of the Church. We can well imagine that Mary herself must have used them in her own prayers and reflections as she pondered the ways of God with her.

Prayer for the day / "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything, from the beginning."

All you nations, praise the Lord — Ps 117:1. Mass readings: Acts 11:19-26 / Jn 10:22-30

Devoted follower / One of the most stirring images of Mary is from the prophet Isaiah, the greatest of the Hebrew prophets, who was able to stir the Jewish People seven hundred years before Christ with his eloquent oratory and powerful poetry. The words he places on Mary's lips are these: "I rejoice heartily in the Lord . . . he has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice."

Since Mary is eminently the disciple of the Lord, all those texts that apply to the tsaddik in the Old Testament are applied to her. The tsaddik is the devoted follower of God's way, who studies His word constantly, who makes the Divine Law his pattern of living and the royal standard by which he lives. The Psalms are filled with this imagery, and that is why so many of the Psalms are applied to Mary.

Prayer for the day / "I rejoice heartily in the Lord; in my God is the joy of my soul."

O God, let all the nations praise you! — Ps 67:4.

Mass readings: Acts 12:24—13:5 / Jn 12:44-50

The Bride of Solomon / The most striking image of Mary in the Psalms is the one in Psalm 45 that describes the bride of Solomon, prepared to enter the court of the king, at the time of her wedding. The Church has seen in this a vivid image of the spiritual beauty of Mary and of God's choice of her to be the mother of His Son and the mother of the redeemed.

All these images of Mary have been embroidered into the great mosaics and stained-glass windows that portray her character and personality. They have become part of the poetry and literature of Catholics as they probe the mystery of Mary. Moreover, they are part of the great Jewish religious heritage of which she was a part, and show her to be the Daughter of Zion and the glory of her People.

Prayer for the day / "Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear, forget your people and your father's house."

The Lord will give him a seat with the leaders of his people — Ps 113:8. Mass readings: Acts 1:15-17, 20-26 / Jn 15:9-17

Varied titles, common devotion / “One in thy thousand statues we salute thee,” writes G.K. Chesterton in his poem: “The Black Virgin.” He was impressed with the presence of Mary in Catholic life, the thousand shrines giving her titles as varied as the geography of the Church itself and reflecting the nations, races and cultures which make up the Catholic community.

From Our Lady of Walsingham in England to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico; from the jewel-adorned Madonnas on Russian icons to black Virgins of Uganda and Biafra; from the classical shrines like Lourdes and Fatima to the roadside shrines of Quebec and Austria, all reflect a common faith, a common devotion, and an ancient Catholic conviction about the Mother of God.

Prayer for the day / “Lady, you can’t say you can’t, and you won’t say you won’t, so you will, won’t you?”

You are my Son; this day I have begotten you — Ps 2:7. Mass readings: Acts 13:26-33 / Jn 14:1-6

Masterpieces of art / It is not only Catholic devotional life that has been enriched by the presence of Mary. The great masterpieces of art are, in the judgment of most authorities, works of religious art, and the place of Our Lady in religious art has never really been measured. She is certainly at the very center of the whole tradition of Western art.

In his poem “The Black Virgin,” Chesterton expresses the bewilderment and wonderment of the Catholic as he faces the “forest of thy names and faces. / One cries ‘Here she stands,’ and one cries ‘Yonder,’ and thou were home in heaven long ago.” Our Lady obviously has not walked the earth for almost two thousand years, yet her presence grows richer and more real with the passing centuries, each generation calling her “blessed” in its own way, and she makes her way into people’s hearts and memories in a way that is quite unlike anything else in history.

Prayer for the day / “Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy; our life, our sweetness and our hope.”

All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God — Ps 98:3. Mass readings: Acts 13:44-52 / Jn 14:7-14

All that is noblest / The lesson of history is that, even though we are often the architects of our own destruction, and find ourselves consistently and repeatedly, “out of wine, out of luck, out of place,” Our Lady steps in and becomes the dispenser of God’s largesse, filling our emptiness and replenishing our resources. This, she has never failed to do in history, and this we can hope she will continue to do until the end of time.

In Mary, at every stage of history, the Christian sees his better face, and she sums up for him all that is noblest and best. He who is mighty has done great things for her, and she, in turn, continues to do great things for those who recognize her as the Mother of God and the Help of Christians.

Prayer for the day / “Mary, Help of Christians, pray for those who have recourse to thee.”

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you — Ps 33:22. Mass readings: Acts 6:1-7 / 1 Pt 2:4-9 / Jn 14:1-12

Mother of Everyone / The Catholic devotion to the Mother of God expresses itself in masterpieces of art, architecture, music and poetry, but these are merely the outward expressions of an inner instinct that is born of faith and based on a profound vision of the place of Mary in Catholic life. There is a deep inner conviction that she is somehow bound up in our own lives, and all the legends about her proclaim this.

Mary is the Mother of Everyone — and that is what we sense in her presence: somehow we do make a difference to her, somehow she sees and knows, and somehow she cares and expresses that care in ways that are known to each one personally.

Prayer for the day / “Mystical star above the slope, Mother of men, be thou our hope!”



Not to us, O Lord, but to your name give the glory —
Ps 115:1. Mass readings: Acts 14:5-18 / Jn 14:21-26

Woman of strength / In his apostolic letter “*Marialis Cultus*,” on devotion to Mary, Pope Paul VI reminded us that Mary is very much a part of the modern world, and that we do not have to call upon images of the past to nourish our devotion to her. She is, he said, the champion of justice and the patroness of the poor and oppressed: she was a woman who “did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions.

“The modern woman will recognize in Mary, who stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, a woman of strength, who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile.” He urges us to bring our image of Mary up to date, and to see her as part of the modern world and the Church of today.

Prayer for the day / “Lady, come in haste to the heaving hilly country of our need, come, lead us home.”

Your friends tell the glory of your kingship, Lord —
Ps 145:12. Mass readings: Acts 14:19-28 / Jn
14:27-31

Part of our lives / Mary is not only Our Lady of the Basilicas, of the Jeweled Shrines, and the great Cathedrals; she is in truth, Our Lady of the Poor, Our Lady of the Prisons, and Our Lady of the Factories.

This is graphically true and understood by those who love her as was shown by a Polish soldier in a Russian concentration camp in World War II, when he plucked an ox-bone out of the soup fed to the prisoners and carved from it a statue of Our Lady. In his deepest soul he felt she was with him in the midst of the suffering and horror of the concentration camp. An American poet wrote of the incident: “neither flogging nor hunger nor death can make captives forsake her: from castaway ox-bone they carve her more splendid than stone.” She is also an intimate part of our lives.

Prayer for the day / “To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.”

I rejoiced when I heard them say: let us go to the house of the Lord — Ps 122:1. Mass readings: Acts 15:1-6 / Jn 15:1-8

Courage / Most people are not familiar with the Medici Madonna of Michelangelo. It is quite different from traditional Madonnas and betrays a strength and a toughness not usually associated with figures of Mary. The Child is turning back to her, and she is viewing Him somewhat sternly, and holding Him firmly in her protecting grasp.

Pope Paul's apostolic letter reminds us of this strong image of Mary, the spiritual Mother Courage who is part of the human drama. He says when we begin to understand this Mary, she will "appear not as a mother exclusively concerned with her own Divine Son, but rather as a woman whose action helped to strengthen the apostolic community's faith in Christ, and whose maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary."

Prayer for the day / "Dear Mother of the Savior, yet remaining Star of the Sea and heaven's open door; Come when we stumble, lifting and sustaining, for in our hearts we long to rise once more."

Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations — Ps 96:3. Mass readings: Acts 15:7-21 / Jn 15:9-11

The grandeur of God / What Mary celebrates, even in this age of computers and space capsules, is the immortality of every single human being: created by God, redeemed by God, destined for a matchless existence in eternal life. She proclaims by her very person that human life opens onto eternity and that the wonder of the Incarnation has become part of the drama of human existence.

In this nuclear age, sitting perilously on the existential edge of things, Mary keeps alive a vision of human worth that built the great Gothic cathedrals and showed human beings something of the grandeur of God. Kneeling at her feet, whether at Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe, or in our own parish church, we glimpse something of this grandeur and find it easy to send our thoughts heavenward.

Prayer for the day / “Who is she who cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in battle array?”

I will praise you among the nations, O Lord — Ps 57:10. Mass readings: Acts 15:22-31 / Jn 15:12-17

Courage and conviction / Mary is the living embodiment of God's vision for the human race, since she is the very Mother of God become man. Without the sense of grandeur which comes from that vision, we can take hunger and oppression, monstrous injustices and inhuman living conditions as normal, as the lot of those caught in the web of human stupidity and intrigue, and we can despair in the face of the massive problems we have to face.

Devotion to Mary does not exempt us from facing and laboring at the critical problems of our times, but we must face them with the ruthless honesty of Mary's Magnificat and that artistry of living of which she is the example and model. That is the rock bottom meaning of devotion to Mary and from her we should be able to draw that courage and conviction that makes us stalwart followers of her Son.

Prayer for the day / "Mother of Christ, and Mother of me, save me alive from the howl of the sea; My body is frozen, my soul is afraid; stretch out your hands to me, Mother and Maid."

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy — Ps 100:2.

Mass readings: Acts 16:1-10 / Jn 15:18-21

Our Lady of the Ages / Belief in Mary means belief in the Incarnation, in the wonder of God becoming man, and that deep spirit of adoration which gives stability to our own lives and leads us to take off into the darkness to carry out our own mission to the world. That is why she is the model of housewives and schoolboys, beggars and kings, monks and missionaries and every other variety of human being.

Our own mission may lead us to the crib and cradle of our own family, to the grit and grime of the factory where we eke out our livelihood, or it may lead us into the “Judean hills” on some errand of mercy. In this, Mary is not only Our Lady of the Factories, she is Our Lady of Everyman and Our Lady of the Ages.

Prayer for the day / “Thou art God’s sky, in which the Sun arose: Thou art His moon, the windows of His light. Thou art God’s earth, God in thee taking root; God’s seed: He was thy tree; God’s tree . . . thy fruit.”

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy — Ps 66:1.

Mass readings: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17 / 1 Pt 3:15-18 / Jn 14:15-21

Magnificent mirrors / In the carrying out of His Divine plan, God has peopled history with rare personalities, magnificent mirrors of His own mind and person: Moses, David, the Prophets, Saint Paul — all capture something rich and meaningful, reflecting the vastness and greatness of God's intention.

It is no wonder that artists, sculptors and poets of every century have tried with the tools of their art to capture something of the significance of Mary, since she is in a sense a synthesis of the Old and New Covenants. In her, first and most uniquely, God's ancient promises are fulfilled and new promises made. She captures in her person and in her God-bearing, the full significance of priest, prophet and apostle, and she is a shining monument to the action of God upon human history.

Prayer for the day / "I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue."

The Lord takes delight in his people — Ps 149:4.

Mass readings: Acts 16:11-15 / Jn 15:26—16:4

Mystery and fact / It is with good reason that Christmas is the loveliest of Christian celebrations and that it returns each year with its wonder and joy. And each day of the year, from churches and monasteries throughout the Catholic world, the Angelus is rung, commemorating the day and the moment when “the Word became Flesh and dwelt amongst us.”

The Incarnation of the Son of God is the key event in the history of the world, as it is the key Christian belief, upon which all other Christian beliefs depend, and from which they draw their meaning and significance. And it is upon the mystery and fact of the Incarnation that the theology of Mary is centered, the chief reason why she is honored in Catholic belief: she is the Mother of Jesus; she is the Mother of the Incarnate Son of God; she is the Theotokos.

Prayer for the day / “Glorious bearer of the Eternal Word, we greet you; exalted beyond time and space, we praise you; Glorified daughter of our race, we venerate you.”

Your right hand has saved me, O Lord — Ps 138:7.

Mass readings: Acts 16:22-34 / Jn 16:5-11

A rallying cry / Theotokos is a name that trips strongly on the lips, not at all as soft as our English “Mother of God.” The Greek title is almost a shout, as it was a rallying cry at the Council that gave her the title. She was the touchstone of faith and the champion of orthodoxy. She came forth as the morning rising, bright as the sun, terrible as an army in battle array.

By that role and title, she is locked in an incredible closeness to the singular event of the Incarnation and the singular Person of Jesus. She knew nothing of the heavens opening up and the clash of angels’ wings as the “Almighty Word leapt down from heaven.” He called no man His father, but He called her “mother”: this fact was her glory, her joy and the root reason for her existence.

Prayer for the day / “Hail, Queen of the heavens! Hail, Empress of the angels! Hail, the source, the gate, the dawn of this world’s light.”

Heaven and earth are filled with your glory — Ps
148. Mass readings: Acts 17:15, 22—18:1 / Jn
16:12-15

'Fiat' / An ancient Anglo-Saxon poem expresses the key doctrine in the theology of Mary, indicating the grandeur of her Motherhood and the wonder of the Person to Whom she gave birth:

Ancient of days asked one lowly and wise
to welcome the Bountiful One into her
bosom,
bestowed blessings, begged to be her Babe.
She met the gaze of Gabriel and bowing low
gave graciously her humble "Fiat."
The heavens bowed down, Holiness left its
height,
and the Lord of all things, and their Maker
took flesh within her hallowed womb.
Nine-month love nestled Him,
and then she brought Him forth,
the Bright One, Maker of stars,
her Babe upon her breast.

Prayer for the day / "Let me be worthy to
praise you, holy Virgin; give me strength in the face
of your enemies."

God mounts his throne to shouts of joy; a blare of trumpets for the Lord — Ps 47:6. Mass readings: Acts 1:1-11 / Eph 1:17-23 / Mt 28:16-20

Last meeting / Jesus' last meeting with His disciples was on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem where they had all gathered to see Him for the last time, when He gave them final instructions: they were to return to the city and await the coming of the "Paraclete."

Was Mary in the group gathered with Jesus for that last meeting? She was back in Jerusalem afterwards with the whole band of apostles, so it is most likely that she was there. Where her own last meeting with Jesus took place, we do not know. Her life must have taken on a new tranquillity as the terrible events of Calvary receded into the background and the stunning hope of the Resurrection began to open new horizons to her mind. She will remain with that little band of apostles until her own Assumption many years later, pondering on the Mystery of Jesus and her own role as Mother of God.

Prayer for the day / "Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, protect me from the enemy, and receive me at the hour of my death."

God is king of all the earth — Ps 47:8. Mass readings: Acts 18:9-18 / Jn 16:20-23

A treasure / For the Catholic, Mary has never been a substitute for the love of God or devotion to Jesus Christ. She is rather a manifestation of His loveliness, one of His wondrous gifts to the human race, a gift and a treasure indicative of His Providence. Just as the mission of the angels takes nothing away from the goodness and Providence of God, but is rather an arm of that Providence, so the person and mission of Mary embodies His goodness in a way that everyone can understand. As the Akathistos Hymn, sung in Greek churches, proclaims: “Hail! of Christ’s wonders the beginning. Hail! Treasure of His Providence!”

Prayer for the day / “A noble flow’r of Judah from tender roots has sprung,

A rose from stem of Jesse, as prophets long had sung,

A blossom fair and bright,

That in the midst of winter will change to dawn our night.”

God is king of all the earth — Ps 47:8. Mass readings: Acts 18:23-28 / Jn 16:23-28

Living inspiration / Mary sums up in herself the Mysteries of the Faith, embodies the hope of Christians in their struggle for goodness and decency, and expresses that deep love of God of which she is the shining example and the living inspiration. Every Catholic people has its national shrine to her, calls her by titles indigenous and local, possesses its own treasury of prayers and hymns to her.

Even before the Second Vatican Council gave her the official designation, she was, and always has been, the Mother of the Church. She becomes part of the local culture wherever she is venerated, her dress as varied as the nations of the world, her appearance reflecting the many races that inhabit this earth of ours.

Prayer for the day / “One in thy thousand statues, we salute thee.”



I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living — Ps 27:13. Mass readings:

Acts 1:12-14 / 1 Pt 4:13-16 / Jn 17:1-11

Queen / If astronauts should ever succeed in traveling to outer space, Mary will undoubtedly become part of those space civilizations as planets are populated and bubble-domed cities dot the cosmos.

What her name will be, whether Our Lady of the Stars, the Madonna of the Milky Way, or the Virgin of the Pleiades, we cannot say. But know with certainty that she will be there, in forms and dress unknown to us, prayed to in languages yet unborn, by peoples who never knew the earth as home. She is La Conquistadora and Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Czestochowa and the Virgin of Chartres, Our Lady of Africa and Our Lady of Walsingham. But there is also Our Lady of the Cosmos and of the Constellations, the Queen of the Universe and the Queen of every man and woman who ever lived on the face of the earth.

Prayer for the day / “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”

Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth — Ps 68:33.

Mass readings: Acts 19:1-8 / Jn 16:29-33

Overconfidence / Today Jesus warns against overconfidence in our own strength.

It is shortly before His passion and His disciples have just announced that they believe in Him completely, saying to Jesus, “Now we see that you know everything!” (16:30). But Jesus cautions them not to rely on themselves but on the Father, as He does. He prophesizes that they will abandon Him, saying that the time will come when they will be scattered, each going his own way, leaving Jesus alone. But He explained that He would not really be alone because the Father would be with Him. We can perhaps picture the disciples’ worried faces when Jesus goes on to tell them that in the world they will have trouble: “But be brave; I have conquered the world” (16:33).

The words of the New Testament speak to people of all times and places. How comforting to hear these words of encouragement really addressed to us personally today, assuring us that He knows and He cares.

Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth — Ps 68:33.

Mass readings: Acts 20:17-27 / Jn 17:1-11

The love of Christ / There is nothing to compare with the love of a parent for a child. Today Jesus is actually asking his Father to love each of us, His son or daughter, as much as He loves Jesus, His Son.

If we listen closely to the Gospel today, we will be amazed at the depth and sensitivity of the love of Christ for us, the brothers and sisters His Father has given Him.

He prays: “Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name so that they may be one, like us. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am” (17:11, 24).

This prayer of Christ was made at the end of His life, and we were very much on His mind. It is a prayer that is appropriate for us, too, as we complete our lives on earth. “I have glorified you on earth and finished the work you gave me to do” (17:4).

Our lives would be much different if we could really understand how much Christ loves us.

Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth — Ps 68:33.

Mass readings: Acts 20: 28-38 / Jn 17:11-19

Called to evangelize / Listen to the words of Christ as He prays to the Father for us: “I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name that they may be one like us” (17:11).

Sometimes we forget that as Catholics each one of us is called to evangelization, to make a difference in the lives of those we meet each day — to be Christ for them.

“Father,” He prayed, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world!” (17:18). In this world the face of Christ looks like ours.

Jesus knows that this is a difficult calling, explaining to the Father, “I am not asking you to remove them from the world but to protect them from the evil one” (17:15).

We need not be afraid to actively care about His mission, which cost Him His life, as we know He supports us 100 percent in our efforts.

Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope — Ps 16:1.
Mass readings: Acts 22:30; 23:6-11 / Jn 17:20-26

Bearing witness / As peace-loving people, we may take casually every Christian's call to evangelize one's neighbor — careful, as good Americans, not to impose our beliefs on anyone.

Still, we may meet resistance, since we are about the same work as Saint Paul, who in today's Scripture was hauled before the Sanhedrin and actually struck on the mouth because he said: "To this day I have conducted myself before God with a perfectly clear conscience" (Acts 23:1). He appealed to his fellow Pharisees, explaining that he was on trial because of his hope in the resurrection of the dead. They actually agreed with him and began to fight against the Saducees until the tribune was afraid they would tear Paul to pieces.

Sometimes all that is required of us is to conduct ourselves as God's courageous friends, keeping our tempers down, being kind to the unlikeable, being a credit to the Master. The Lord appears to Paul the next night saying: "Courage! you have borne witness for me in Jerusalem; now you must do the same in Rome!" (Acts 23:11).

The Lord has set his throne in heaven — Ps 103:19.

Mass readings: Acts 25:13-21 / Jn 21:15-19

'Do you love me?' / It was some days after the Resurrection, and the disciples, including Peter, had spent a hopeless night fishing. When Jesus appeared on the shore, He invited them to cast their nets on the starboard side, and at once their nets were filled to overflowing.

Coming ashore they saw that Jesus had prepared breakfast for them — fish sizzling over a charcoal fire and fresh bread. Peter suddenly remembered another charcoal fire where he had been warming himself when he denied Jesus three times, and he wondered if Jesus remembered. Sure enough, after the meal, Jesus asked Peter three times: “Do you love me?” He touched Peter where he needed healing — in his almost arrogant confidence in himself. Peter, now no longer sure of himself, declares: “*You* know all things; *you* know that I love you!” Christ accepts his love, the only real condition for being an apostle and says to Peter: “Feed my sheep.”

Risen Christ, touch me where I need to be healed that I may love You and become Your apostle.

The just will gaze on your face, O Lord — Ps 11:7.
Mass readings: Acts 28: 16-20, 30-31 / Jn 21:20-25

Persuading others / It is never easy to go against loved ones for the sake of our beliefs. Today Saint Paul, a Jew, although a Roman citizen, reasons with the Jews in Rome saying: "I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors" (Acts 28:17). The Romans had arrested him in Jerusalem under pressure from the Jews there, forcing Paul to appeal to Caesar. Almost apologizing, Paul insists he has made no accusation to the Romans against his own nation.

It is to the credit of the Roman Jews that they then invite Paul to present his case, which he does: "testifying to the Kingdom of God and trying to persuade them about Jesus, arguing from the law of Moses and the prophets. This went on from morning until early evening . . . some were convinced by what he said, while the rest were skeptical" (Acts 28:35-5).

And so with us. Some will listen and some will be skeptical, but we "go on from morning until early evening," each in our own way, trying to persuade others about Jesus.

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth — Ps 104:30. Mass readings: Vigil — Gn 11:1-9 or Ex 19:3-8, 16-20 or Ez 37:1-14 or Jl 3:1-5 / Rom 8:22-27 / Jn 7:37-39; Day — Acts 2:1-11 / 1 Cor 12:3-7, 12-13 / Jn 20:19-23

Peace / Receive the Holy Spirit! The apostles remembered the first time they heard the words.

A whole day had gone by since Jesus commissioned Mary Magdalen to go and tell the brothers that He had risen. It was now evening, and the disciples were huddled in a room together, hiding from the Jews. Suddenly their world was changed when Jesus stood in their midst and in the dear, familiar voice said: “Peace be with you” (20:21).

They recognized the same familiar figure with whom they had tramped across the hills of Galilee, hanging on His every word, feeling an ecstatic share in His mission. They recognized the hands so often extended in healing; shyly they stole a look at the lineaments of the face, full of compassion. Yes, it was He, and He still wanted them in His service, assuring them: “As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.” “Receive the Holy Spirit!” They gratefully heard the message they in turn were to bring to a world that so longed for it: “You are forgiven.”

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord — Ps 34:9.

Mass readings: 2 Cor 1: 1-7 / Mt 5:1-12

Counter-cultural / As Catholic Christians we are called to be counter-cultural. We are called to live out values that seem to be just the opposite of those touted in our contemporary society.

The story is told about a monk who was accosted by a man demanding a stone from the monk's sack. "I was told in a dream," the man said, "that if I got that stone, I would find happiness." The monk shook out his sack and the man ran off with the rock, which turned out to be a huge diamond. But the man couldn't sleep that night. The next morning he returned the stone, saying to the monk: "I want what you have — that enables you to give away a stone like that!"

The first Beatitude means "Happy are those who know their need of God!" The other seven give us ways to be happy and the reasons why. Truly there is work to be done in order to find joy in these difficulties, but they are God's promises and worthy of our consideration.

Lord, let your face shine on me — Ps 119:135. Mass readings: 2 Cor 1: 18-22 / Mt 5:13-16

Self-esteem / Most of us suffer somewhat from low-esteem. We may even think we are pleasing God by being down on ourselves, or thinking we are not worth much. Yet Jesus says to us: “You are the salt of the earth. . . . You are the light of the world. . . .” (Mt 5:13,14). Your light must shine in the world to remind others to praise the Father in Heaven. Evidently God thinks each of us is important and He depends upon us.

There is nothing like the experience of being loved to restore our self-esteem and to make us feel worth loving. Christ appeared to a mystic in 15th-century England and said: “Not all your prayers, penances, and good works mean so much to me as that you should believe that I love you.”

Like Mary in the Magnificat I can say, “My being acknowledges the greatness of the Lord!” All I have is Gift from Him. Lord, I do believe. Help me to be Your light in the world.



Holy is the Lord our God — Ps 99:9. Mass readings:
2 Cor 3:4-11 / Mt 5:17-19

Fulfillment of the Law / We are surprised today to hear Christ speak so strongly in favor of the Law. He says not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved. The Pharisees felt that the Law was fulfilled when each commandment was carried out by hundreds of rules and regulations that would require a full-time commitment to live. They were critical of Jesus when He didn't split hairs, when He put charity ahead of the rules, such as healing a person on the Sabbath.

To Jesus, fulfillment of the Law meant to bring out its full meaning, which is based on reverence for God and respect for one's neighbor. Those meeting only the demands of legalism have done their duty. Those motivated by love of Christ and neighbor are never finished! Love knows no bounds, and we can never love God enough in gratitude for His love for us.

Not to abolish the Law, but to complete it, Jesus said. The one who keeps and teaches it will earn heaven.

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power
— Ps 98:2. Mass readings: Acts 11:21-26; 13:1-3 /
Mt 10:7-13 or Mt 5:20-26

To the ends of the earth / A wave of persecution swept through the early Church after the stoning of young Stephen, and the disciples were forced to escape to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. As they found themselves on the move, God surprised them by showing them a unique opportunity to spread the Gospel. They remembered the commission Jesus had given them from the Father at the time of the Ascension: “You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

He had surprised them at Pentecost by setting them on fire with His love. Accustomed to proclaiming the Gospel to Jews only, they amazed themselves by their success in converting the Greeks at Antioch. It was a great occasion. Not only were large numbers of people won over to the Lord, but it was at Antioch that the first followers of Jesus were called Christians. God has surprises in store for us, too, if we accept them. Our desires create in us the capacity to be filled.

To you, Lord, I will offer a sacrifice of praise — Ps 116:17. Mass readings: 2 Cor 4:7-15 / Mt 5:27-32

Trust in God / As soon as we begin to take seriously our call to participate in Christ's work of evangelization, we seem to be surrounded with difficulties. We may be misunderstood and hassled for our trouble; maybe personal problems multiply; the frustrations of life itself make it hard to avoid depression and even despair.

Today's words of Saint Paul cut clearly through these obstacles, encouraging us not to be surprised at all this, but to be ready. We can see these trials as a call inviting us to trust in God, to focus not on present unfortunate circumstances, but on the Source of our real strength.

We are only earthen vessels after all. Paul says that despite our troubles, we are never really cornered; we may be persecuted but never deserted. Although we may be knocked down, we are never killed! Truly we are called to a unique kind of greatness. If we carry the death of Jesus in our bodies, we carry also His Life — this Treasure, an overwhelming power with which God has gifted us.

The Lord is kind and merciful — Ps 103:8. Mass readings: 2 Cor 5:14-21 / Mt 5:33-37

Image of God / After the call to renewal by Vatican II, many saw their mission as reconciliation — to do what they could to restore to God people in all kinds of need, especially those estranged from God or those with a false idea of God.

Can we do anything to erase from people's minds the image of a cold, punishing God they have carried around with them since childhood? Or the opposite — a wimpy God who couldn't care less what happens to them, so that it doesn't matter what they do — it will all end in sweetness and light anyhow?

Those in the grasp of poverty or drugs, the marginalized, the vast numbers of the unchurched, need to hear that Christ loves them with a compassionate love and calls them to a happy, worthwhile existence. The angry leper at Molakai finally said to Damien: "If your God is anything like you, I want to know him."

Reconciliation with Christ makes each of us a new creation, with the hope of having every need and desire fulfilled in Him.

Glory and praise for ever! — Dn 3:52. Mass readings: Ex 34:4-6, 8-9 / 2 Cor 13:11-13 / Jn 3:16-18

Model of relationships / On Trinity Sunday we celebrate relationships, since the model of all relationships exists between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We recall how the Father sent Jesus to earth, and He in turn commissioned the Apostles at the Ascension to go and make disciples of all nations — to bring Him to the world society. We reflect this societal relationship, too, when we remember that we are also sent out to invite those we meet to follow Jesus.

Jesus, the Son, has an intra-personal relationship with each of us. At the Resurrection He touches us where we are most in need. He is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Without His healing touch, we cannot bring His healing to others.

The Spirit of Pentecost helps us to develop the interpersonal relationships needed to meet others where they are and to mediate Christ to them. It is the Spirit of Jesus who unites us so that our surface differences do not divide, but rather enrich our basic commitment of love to each other.

The Lord has made known his salvation — Ps 98.2.

Mass readings: 2 Cor 6:1-10 / Mt 5:38-42

Giving good example / If we had any doubt that as Christians we are involved in the evangelization of our neighbor, Paul sets us straight when he refers to us today as the “fellow workers” of Jesus.

The challenge he presents to us is the call to be counter-cultural. In today’s society we are encouraged to act out our feelings — to “let it all hang out.” Everyone has a right to do this, of course, with a confidante. But if we all complain continually and rail against our lot, we will, as Paul warns, bring discredit on ourselves as the Lord’s servants.

In the old days we called it giving good example. When we see someone acting nobly, it is easier for us to do the same. Paul says that we must be a credit to the Master by fortitude in times of suffering, by knowledge, by patience, and especially kindness. He isn’t easy with us! He counsels us to rejoice — to accept whatever comes — praise or blame — content that our efforts are totally for the Lord.

Praise the Lord, my soul! — Ps 146:2. Mass readings: 2 Cor 8:1-9 / Mt 5:43-48

Encouragement / Saint Paul was a person who used all his natural gifts, including persuasiveness, in the service of Christ. Just as we would encourage students by pointing out all their good qualities, so does Paul with the Corinthians. Then when he has built up their self-esteem, he shows them of what they are capable — they can do even more than the outstanding Christians of Macedonia!

He reasons: “You always have the most of everything — of faith, of eloquence, of understanding, of keenness for any cause, and the biggest share of our affection, so we expect you to put the most into this work of mercy, too” (2 Cor 8:7-8).

Corinthians, look at the Macedonians! Offering their very selves to God, they gave not only as much as they could afford, but far more, begging Paul to be of service to the community. They had great trials, Paul continues, but their cheerfulness was obvious everywhere. Despite their intense poverty, the wealth of their generosity knew no bounds! Paul’s words inspired them (and us, too) to enthusiastically follow Christ.

Happy the man who fears the Lord — Ps 112:1.

Mass readings: 2 Cor 9:6-11 / Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Generosity / Before Vatican II there was an emphasis on keeping out of sin. Also, before Vatican II, Catholics did not read the Bible as much as they do now. If they had, they would have noted that Christianity, as interpreted by Saint Paul, definitely has a positive approach, more than merely staying out of sin.

Today there seems to be a new emphasis on service, however this idea goes back to the early Christians. "God loves a cheerful giver," Saint Paul says. "Thin sowing means thin reaping" (2 Cor 9:6). One must not give grudgingly, Paul cautions, as he constantly encourages his new converts to be alert to their neighbors' needs and to be generous in their service of one another.

Of course we know that God will never be outdone in generosity. Paul promises that there is no limit to the blessings with which God will reward you! He will make sure that you will always have what you need for yourself in every possible circumstance and still have something to spare for all sorts of good works.

Your works, O Lord, are justice and truth — Ps 111:7. Mass readings: 2 Cor 11:1-11 / Mt 6:7-15

The New Covenant / Each day Christ makes Himself accessible to all in the Eucharist. When Christ referred to Himself in the Eucharist as the New Covenant, He implied a sacred bond between Him and His people, even greater than the Exodus Covenant. In this New Covenant, we become one with Christ in a new and marvelous way. We become identified with Him and His mission to all the world. Nobody cared about people more than He did.

In the Eucharist we celebrate our oneness with Christ under the symbol of table fellowship. In the Bible, sharing bread together implies commitment to table-mates, and in this case, it means taking on the concern of Christ for the neighbor, a caring which cost Him His life.

It is not enough to ritualize our commitment to others if we do not seek justice for the poor, the minorities, and the have-nots. In the Eucharist we actually become the Covenant and responsible, insofar as it lies in our power, for bringing the healing of Christ to others.

From all their afflictions God will deliver the just —
Ps 34:18. Mass readings: 2 Cor 11:18, 21-30 / Mt
6:19-23

Storing up treasures / Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth but store up for yourselves treasure in heaven (Cf. Mt 6:19-20).

Everyone agrees with this counsel that Jesus gave us in the Sermon on the Mount, but our interpretations vary widely. How much storing up is too much? We integrate the values of our society with our Christian values and think we have done a pretty good job of it until we hear about people like Mother Teresa, or laypeople helping the homeless at Boston's Pine Street Inn, or Good Shepherd Sisters caring for homeless women in New York City.

The Gospel calls us to a radical following of Christ, but the extent to which we respond is pretty much up to us. The treasures we store up can easily make us quite unfree to look around and see what our neighbors need. We need His special gift of awareness to be sure that these subtle bonds of acquisitiveness do not make us blind to the poor and the needy and thus steal away from us the Treasure we felt was secure.

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord — Ps 34:9.

Mass readings: 2 Cor 12:1-10 / Mt 6:24-34

Stop worrying / If we could only plumb the depths of Matthew's Gospel today, all our worries would be over. The Lord tells us five times to stop worrying! Don't worry about your life; why worry about clothing! What good will all your worrying accomplish? So, not to worry! And finally, don't worry about tomorrow; tomorrow takes care of itself.

That is not a simplistic message. We are not counseled to be irresponsible. The key lies in this: "No one can serve two masters" (Cf. Mt 6:24). Our heavenly Father knows our needs, and if only we can give Him priority, we will be happy. "Set your hearts on His kingdom first. . . ," says Jesus, "and all these other things will be given you as well" (6:33). It's the Paschal mystery: if you seek your life, you will lose it; if you lose your life for Christ, you will find it. You will make out better if you put His concerns for others ahead of your own! What a challenge to our faith and our logical minds!

Praise the Lord, Jerusalem — Ps 147:12. Mass readings: Dt 8:2-3, 14-16 / 1 Cor 10:16-17 / Jn 6:51-58

The Word made Flesh / “He let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with . . . a food unknown to you, in order to show you that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord” (Dt 8:3).

On the Feast of Corpus Christi, we know we have more than bread here — we have the Word Made Flesh, who came forth from the Lord as pre-figured in the Old Testament so many centuries ago. Jesus invites us to come to Him, hungry, promising to give us more than bread. As we gather around the table of the Lord, we find that we are both fed and expected to do some of the feeding. In the Eucharist we ritualize the very lives we live; we care about our neighbor’s needs. We celebrate this lifestyle by Eucharist.

When we make the work of Christ our own, He is all the while taking care of us. We need to become aware of our hunger so that He can empower us for His mission.

Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own
— Ps 33:12. Mass readings: Gn 12:1-9 / Mt 7:1-5

Passages of life / It isn't often that one is called, as Abraham was, to leave his country, his kinfolk, and his father's house for the land that God promised to show him.

Yet life is full of partings. We must say good-bye to childhood, to high school or college, or our own home as we are called to maturity, to a job, to marriage or the religious life.

Within these big passages of life, there are smaller transitions that occur each day prodding us to move on, even when we would rather resist the challenge and stay dependent rather than risk making a mistake. We may prefer, instead, to nurse wounded feelings.

Each day at the Eucharist God calls us into the future. We come to Him a different person than we were yesterday, and we don't know what lies ahead. Sometimes we do not recognize God's call in sorrow or difficulties, as He beckons us in another direction. Wherever He leads, it is always a call to trust and we can depend on Him to be with us on the way.

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord — Ps 15:1. Mass readings: Gn 13:2, 5-18 / Mt 7:6, 12-14

'I am with you' / "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." The Lord speaks these words to each of us, just as He spoke them to Jeremiah in the reading from the Vigil Mass celebrated today.

God called us into being, and He also called us to our life's work. He continues to call us forth each day of our lives. We need prayerful silence in order to listen to the Lord and attend to what He expects of each of us.

Jeremiah was upset when God called him to go forth and speak in His name, protesting: "I am too young!" God reassured him, telling him not to be afraid, for "I am with you!" (1:8).

Sometimes it is difficult to know what to say when someone needs counsel or comforting, yet many are waiting to hear the Word of God through us. Why should we fear? Just as the Lord extended His hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth saying: "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth," He will tell us, also, what words will bring His comfort to our neighbor.

Since my mother's womb, you have been my strength
— Ps 71:6. Mass readings: Vigil — Jer 1:4-10 / 1 Pt
1:8-12 / Lk 1:5-17; Day — Is 49:1-6 / Acts 13:
22-26 / Lk 1:57-66

Good servants / Isaiah wrote some of the most beautiful poetry in the world. In the second Servant Song read today, the Servant is most often understood as Jesus. God the Father says: "I will give you as a light to the nations." Jesus will be their salvation.

Sometimes Isaiah's words are taken to mean John the Baptist. "The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name" (49:1). We recall that at Mary's greeting the babe (John) in the womb of Elizabeth leaped for joy. John spent his life proclaiming Jesus.

Isaiah's words in the Song can be applied to us, who are God's good servants. "You are my servant . . . in whom I will be glorified" (Is 49:3). We are given two great models to follow, Jesus and John the Baptist.

The day will come when Jesus will call us even closer, saying: "I no longer call you servants but friends. There is no love greater than this — to give one's life for one's friends" (Cf. Jn 15:14-15).

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good — Ps 106:1.
Mass readings: Gn 16:1-12, 15-16 or 16:6-12, 15-16
/ Mt 7:21-29

Different points of view / Anyone familiar with the New Testament will remember what Christ thought of hypocrites. He showed Himself compassionate and understanding to all kinds of sinners, but He had strong words for those whose actions contrasted sharply with their preaching.

The first requirement of one who instructs others is listening. There are points of view different from one's own, and no one should be condemned without a hearing. The wise person begins by listening to the Word of God.

The Word of God will soon make it clear that one must not be a hearer only, but must also be a doer. Fine words are cheap unless they are supported by fine deeds. When Jesus told us that whatever service we perform for one another will be accepted as though done for Him, He gave the supreme example of how blessed they will be who hear the Word of God and keep it.

Scripture counsels us to build our spiritual house solidly. We must plan to listen well, then proceed to carry out the Lord's designs for us.

The Lord's kindness is everlasting to those who fear him — Ps 103:17. Mass readings: Dt 7:6-11 / 1 Jn 4:7-16 / Mt 11:25-30

Harmony in Scripture / There is a harmony in the Bible that can be discovered as one becomes familiar with the Old Testament as well as the New. Today in the Book of Deuteronomy the Lord addresses the chosen people and speaks to them of God's mercy, as was demonstrated when the Lord led them through the Red Sea out of Egyptian bondage.

Today the Lord speaks to us, too, in the words of Deuteronomy. We are the new people of God who have Jesus as our Savior. "The Lord loves you. . . . Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him" (Dt 7:8-9).

The love of the Sacred Heart shines forth throughout the Scripture. Not only does He invite us to be liberated from the bondage of sin, but He offers us His help and compassion along the way. In Matthew's Gospel today He says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28-29).

The Lord has remembered his mercy — Lk 1:54.

Mass readings: Gn 18:1-15 / Mt 8:5-17 or Lk 2:41-51

Everything is possible / Abraham entertained three visitors, not knowing who they were. The story calls one of them, “Lord,” who said: “I will surely return to you in the spring and Sarah your wife will have a son.” When the elderly Sarah laughed at the thought, she was asked: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Gen 18:14).

We are reminded of the Angels who told Mary that her cousin, Elizabeth, who had been childless, would conceive a son, because “with God nothing will be impossible” (Lk 1:36). It is comforting to know that, when nothing seems to work out, when it seems that nothing is under control — with God everything is possible. Sometimes He allows us to fail, thus calling us to trust Him, to Whom we should have gone in the first place.

Faith in Christ is very pleasing to Him. The centurion’s words in Matthew’s Gospel today are preserved forever in each Mass that is offered. “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof; say but the word, and my soul shall be healed” (Mt 8:8-9).

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord — Ps 89:2. Mass readings: 2 Kgs 4:8-11, 14-16 / Rom 6:3-4, 8-11 / Mt 10:37-42

'Feed my sheep' / In the readings for the vigil for tomorrow's feast, Christ asks Peter if he loves Him. Each time that Peter proclaims that he does, Christ says, "Feed my lambs" and "Feed my sheep." The basic requirement for doing the work of the Lord is that we love Him.

What does it mean to love Jesus? Books have been written on the subject, and yet Matthew sums it up quite succinctly. If we truly love Him, we will put the affairs of Jesus before our own interests. He is so solicitous regarding the neighbor that He says: "If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly he will not lose his reward" (Mt 10:42). "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me" (10:40).

Jesus is clear, yet He knows His way is hard. Anyone who does not take up His cross and follow in His footsteps is not worthy of Him. Yet He promises: "Anyone who loves his life for my sake will find it."

Their message goes out through all the earth — Ps 19:5. Mass readings: Vigil — Acts 3:1-10 / Gal 1:11-20 / Jn 21:15-19; Day — Acts 12:1-11 / 2 Tm 4:6-8, 17-18 / Mt 16:13-19

The crown awaiting us / Peter and Paul did not have an easy time of it. It was their burning love of Christ that empowered them to work for the Gospel until they were exhausted. Both witnessed to Christ even to martyrdom. Saint Paul never regretted spending his life in the service of the Master. At the close of his life he could say cheerfully: “My life is being poured away as a libation I have fought the good fight to the end . . . I have kept the faith. All there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me” (2 Tm 4:6-8).

It is all right for us to look forward, as Paul did, to the crown awaiting us! It must have been a great source of encouragement to Paul, and he promises us that the Lord will give the crown “to all those who have longed for his appearing” (4:8). We who have longed for His appearing and have worked and prayed that His Kingdom may come on earth can look forward with joy to our meeting with the Lord.

O Lord, your kindness is before my eyes — Ps 26:3.

Mass readings: Gn 19:15-29 / Mt 8:23-27

Trust Him / It may be difficult to understand the fright of the disciples when the storm rose at sea, because Jesus was in the boat with them! Granted, He was asleep, but that was the test of their faith. When the fierce, high waves buffeted their little boat, they cried out to Him in panic: “Save us, Lord! We are going down!” (8:26). We can imagine Him observing them calmly, gently scolding: “Why are you so frightened, you men of little faith?” (8:26).

The Gospel account says that He reprimanded the winds and the sea, and they became calm. The disciples’ reaction now is even more puzzling. “Whatever kind of man is this?” they asked. “Even the winds and the sea obey him!” (8:27). They are frightened in a different sense now, although they had demanded that He do something!

It is reassuring to know that the Lord does not weary of us, though we may respond to Him in strange ways, usually more focused on ourselves than on Him. All He asks is that we trust Him!

From Fr. Stevens

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