

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Matt 11:25

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;

you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 5:17-37; L76A

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, ‘Raca,’

will be answerable to the Sanhedrin;

and whoever says, ‘You fool,’

will be liable to fiery Gehenna.



Reflecting on the Gospel

We are more like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' time than we sometimes like to admit; that is, we fulfill the law perfectly but have little regard for what the law calls us to. One easy example: many cities today have erected speed and red light cameras at critical intersections that have caused serious accidents in the past. The law gives us a speed limit and asks us to stop when the light is yellow or red. *The reason for this law is to save injury and lives. Yet, so many of*

us disregard the law. We step on the gas when the light turns yellow and regularly exceed speed limits. However, when we know these cameras are at intersections, we slow down and stop when we might stomp on the gas at another intersection. Yes, we keep the law. But our heart is not in it. Our wallet is.

In this gospel selection, a continuation of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which is a blueprint for faithful Christian living, Jesus is speaking about laws and human behavior. He does not make his hearers' lives easier by easing the law; he does give a better reason for keeping it than the consequences of breaking laws: deepening right relationships with those around us. He has not come to abolish the law; he has come to show us what its fulfillment looks like.

What does it mean for Jesus to fulfill the law? Jesus sees in the law the means to the fulfillment of time (“until all things have taken place”), when the law will be replaced by righteous relationships within the kingdom of heaven. The fundamental law is gift of self to others. When self-giving is lacking in any act of keeping the law, the law in fact is not kept. We are to

keep the law as the way to enter a manner of caring for and relating to others that leads to fullness of Life. Our model for so doing is Jesus.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Each example given in the longer form of this Sunday's gospel points to typical human behaviors that every one of us experience at one time or another in our lives: anger with those close to us, need for reconciliation, repayment of just debts, fidelity in relationships, temptation, doing what we mean to do. As humans we can expect to have difficulties with each other. Jesus is not asking us to be perfect; he is asking us to pay attention to how we deal with one another and strive for a “righteousness” (that is, right relationships) that surpasses what we need to do minimally to get along with each other.

Practically, this means that we don't say a perfunctory “I'm sorry” when we've hurt another, but mean it from our heart and strive to do whatever we can to restore the rupture in the relationship. It means that we look at the root of our anger with others and perhaps there discover what needs to change in us. It means that when we are unfaithful in relationships we question whether we are demanding too much of others, whether our own selfishness is getting in the way of growing in our love for others. It means that we follow through on our commitments.

The “righteousness” that Jesus asks of us is not concerned with minimums—even of keeping the law—but is concerned with caring for others as he did. It means loving as he did. Jesus lives the supreme act of love: giving self totally. To follow Jesus faithfully, we must also develop a daily habit of giving self to others—for their good and for our own. For a life habit of self-giving love is the only way we “enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Continued in Appendix A, p. 267.

or Matt 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37 in Appendix A, p. 267.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: law . . . fulfill, until all things have taken place, kingdom of heaven, righteousness surpasses

To the point: What does it mean for Jesus to fulfill the law? Jesus sees in the law the means to the fulfillment of time (“until all things have taken place”), when the law will be replaced by righteous relationships within the kingdom of heaven. The fundamental law is gift of self to others. When self-giving is lacking in any act of keeping the law, the law in fact is not kept. We are to keep the law as the way to enter a manner of caring for and relating to others that leads to fullness of Life. Our model for so doing is Jesus.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: Keeping the law as an act of love (gospel) is a matter of “life and death” (first reading). We have only to make the choice.

to our experience: We don’t choose to fall in love, it just happens. But staying in love requires constant choosing, that what just happened by chance and grace becomes pattern and commitment. The same is true for the fundamental law of self-giving, which is really a fundamental law of love.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the psalter and includes within its carefully planned framework many types of psalm genres all woven together in praise of God’s law. The relationship between the verses of Psalm 119 selected for this responsorial psalm and the first reading and gospel are readily evident. Those who keep the commandments of God are choosing life over death, good over evil (first reading). Those who understand the deepest intent of the law see it not as a list of external rubrics, but as an invitation to more just and loving relationships (gospel). In the psalm we ask God to give us the kind of discernment Jesus brings to the law. We pray also for the kind of obedience to the law Jesus exemplifies: obedience flowing from a heart tempered by compassion, forgiveness, truth, and mercy.

to psalmist preparation: Wholehearted obedience to God’s law leads not to a rigid heart but to a warm one. How have you grown over the years in your understanding of God’s law? How has God’s law made you more compassionate, more merciful, more truthful, more just? Where do you need to continue growing?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- Those who have taught me the real meaning of keeping the law are . . . I realize I have failed to keep the meaning of the law when . . .
- My actions reveal that the fundamental law is gift of self to others when . . .
- Jesus fulfilled the law; I fulfill the law when I . . .

PRESIDERS

My preaching has led others to understand and keep more perfectly the fundamental law of love in these ways . . .

DEACONS

My serving those in need is a keeping of the fundamental law of gift of self to others when I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My manner of giving self to those gathering for liturgy draws them also to give themselves to others when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

Singing is by nature a giving of self, and I am most aware of Christ’s Presence in my sung self-gift when . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My self-giving is more an act of love than a perfunctory duty when I . . .

LECTORS

Keeping the fundamental law of gift of self helps my proclamation lead others to Jesus when I . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The manner of my distributing Holy Communion hastens the fulfillment of time when I . . .

CELEBRATION

Model Penitential Act

Presider: In this gospel Jesus calls us to grasp that the fundamental meaning of keeping God's law is to strive for righteous relationships with each other and God. As we prepare to celebrate this liturgy, let us consider when we have fallen short of loving others and seek God's mercy . . . [pause]

Lord Jesus, you are God's gift of salvation for us: Lord . . .

Christ Jesus, you are the fulfillment of all law: Christ . . .

Lord Jesus, you are the way to fullness of Life: Lord . . .

Homily Points

- A cartoon that once appeared in *The New Yorker* depicted Moses standing in front of a mountain holding the two tablets of the Law. One of the many people present remarked that these commandments don't leave us much wiggle room. In fact, they leave us a lot of wiggle room. The law does not bind our behavior with legalistic chains, but opens our hearts to the expanse of self-giving love.
- Jesus does not abolish the law but shows us the way to its fulfillment. Merely keeping the law holds us time-bound. Moving beyond keeping the law to embracing the fundamental law of love breaks us out of time and leads us toward the fullness of time when the kingdom of heaven will be definitively established. Moreover, the inbreaking of God's kingdom takes place even now, when the law of overflowing love completes the law of right conduct.
- Simply keeping the law is not enough, for while the law of God is there to make us warm-hearted, the way we sometimes keep it makes us coldhearted. We are coldhearted law keepers, for example, when we use rigid obedience to law as justification for negative judgments of others or when we use the law as protection from responding to the needs of others. All God's laws are a matter of choice. Beyond merely keeping the law, the choice concerns what is fundamental: gift of self and care for others. Keeping the law must open our hearts to the expanse of self-giving love. In this expanse lies the kingdom of heaven.

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: Our loving God always opens the divine heart in care for us. So we are encouraged to make our needs known.

Response:



Lord, ——— hear our prayer.

Cantor:



we pray to the Lord,

That all members of the church embrace more faithfully the fundamental law of self-giving love . . . [pause]

That all peoples strengthen right relationships with each other, building a world of justice and peace . . . [pause]

That the law of love leads communities to respond more fully to the needs of the poor, the sick, the lonely, the homeless, and the disheartened . . . [pause]

That all of us gathered here may hasten through our manner of right living the fullness of God's kingdom . . . [pause]

Presider: Loving God, you give us the law to guide us on our life's journey: keep us faithful and loving that one day we might live the fullness of Life with you forever. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Sir 15:15-20

If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live; he has set before you fire and water; to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand. Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him. Immense is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power, and all-seeing. The eyes of God are on those who fear him; he understands man's every deed. No one does he command to act unjustly, to none does he give license to sin.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

R₁. (1b) Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Blessed are they whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who observe his decrees, who seek him with all their heart.

R₂. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

You have commanded that your precepts be diligently kept.

Oh, that I might be firm in the ways of keeping your statutes!

R₃. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Be good to your servant, that I may live and keep your words.

Open my eyes, that I may consider the wonders of your law.

R₄. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

CATECHESIS

Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of your statutes,
that I may exactly observe them.
Give me discernment, that I may observe your law
and keep it with all my heart.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

SECOND READING

1 Cor 2:6-10

Brothers and sisters:

We speak a wisdom to those who are mature,
not a wisdom of this age,
nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.
Rather, we speak God's wisdom,
mysterious, hidden,
which God predetermined before the ages for our glory,
and which none of the rulers of this age knew;
for, if they had known it,
they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written:

*What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him,
this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.*

For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

About Liturgy

Letter or spirit of the liturgy: It has been a little over two years since we began implementing the new translation of the third edition of *The Roman Missal*. By now most parishes or liturgical communities have learned the new Mass settings, have relearned responses, and have probably taken most of this for granted. But this raises a question in the light of this Sunday's gospel: have we implemented the new translation as a rote response to a liturgical "law," or have we truly said yes to what the church has asked of us and made concrete attempts to pray the Mass better?

The spirit of the liturgy is truly about "righteousness"—about right relationships with God and each other. It is not nearly enough in our liturgical celebrations to simply follow liturgical law. The liturgical laws and guidelines are there to help us give ourselves over to a common prayer, one that is much larger than our personal likes or needs. Simply saying yes to a law is not enough. We are called by our gospel values and habit of living right relationships to commit ourselves to growing in our liturgical prayer, to making a concerted effort to understand what we are doing during liturgy, and to surrender ourselves to a celebration of what is most important in our lives: the very life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

About Liturgical Music

Music suggestions: "Your Ways Are Not Our Own" (W4) would be an excellent choice for the entrance procession. Verse 1 reads, "Your ways are not our own, O gracious God most high, Yet we would follow in your paths And on your love rely," and verse 5 states, "Forgiveness is our joy, Receiving, giving, too. Keep us from judgments hard and cruel, That we may dwell with you." In verse 2 of "Christ Before Us" (BB) we sing, "May we be for one another all that you would have us be. May we live your law of kindness, love, compassion, charity." This hymn would be suitable for the preparation of the gifts. Another good choice for the preparation of the gifts would be "My People, What Do I Require?" (SS). Verse 4 challenges us to "Walk humbly: test your ways by mine and live by my clear Word." "Choose Life" (WC) is an attractive verse-refrain setting of the text of the first reading. This song could be used during the Communion procession with cantor or choir singing the verses and assembly the refrain. A choral octavo is available from WLP. A fitting song for the recessional would be "What Does the Lord Require" (W4). This hymn calls us to "fulfill God's law so hard and high" by acting in ways that lead us to "Do justly; Love mercy; Walk humbly with your God."

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Matt 17:5

From the shining cloud the Father's voice is heard:
This is my beloved Son, hear him.

Gospel Matt 17:1-9; L25A

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Reflecting on the Gospel

Last Sunday, temptations. This Sunday, glory. How well these two gospels capture the realities of our human condition: we are weak and vulnerable and sinful at the same time we have a vision of strength and victory and glory. The vision and promise of Jesus' glory shown forth by his transfiguration is what sustains us in face of temptation and weakness and draws us forward on a faithful journey of discipleship. The transfiguration is a foreshadowing of the fulfillment, the greater and permanent glory of Jesus' being

"raised from the dead" after three days. By our consistently choosing Christ, he becomes more manifest in our lives so we, too, share in this glory. Thus, the transfiguration of Christ foreshadows our own coming to glory.

We accept the gift of glory Jesus offers when we "listen to him." But listening does more than promise glory; it reminds us that to reach that glory we must be willing to join Jesus in his passion and death as well. Our Christian journey is about listening to God's word, living a life of dying to self, and basking in the new Life that comes to those who faithfully follow Jesus "up a high mountain" of transfiguration and promised glory and also "down from the mountain" to the everyday temptations and the demands of self-giving. Why are we willing to travel this Christian journey, to climb arduous mountains to be given the

blessing of glory? Because of the great hope we have in the outcome.

What high mountain must we climb for us to witness Jesus' transfiguration? We must climb the high mountain of listening to Jesus, the high mountain of being pleasing to him, the high mountain of opening ourselves to the touch of his Presence. When we climb this mountain, we forsake our own agenda of pitching the tent of satisfaction with our own works to enter into the glory of the Life Jesus offers us. The mountain is steep; the climb is ours to choose; the vision at the top is divine—"white as light," shining "like the sun." Can we see him?

Living the Paschal Mystery

Temptation can be disheartening, and Lent can be a dauntingly long time. It is the touch of Christ that allays our fears and encourages us to pursue the promised blessings. It is the touch of Christ that assures us we can live the blessing given to us. Here is the human condition: the pervasiveness of temptation contrasts with the vision of glory. Here is the divine invitation: listen to Jesus and have our fears and temptations dispelled so we, too, can share in Jesus' glory. Temptation and Christ's glory are both part of our everyday living; they parallel the pervasive dying and rising of the paschal mystery.

The issue with living the paschal mystery is always to take the "theory" and put it into practice. Peter responded "practically" to Jesus' transfiguration by wanting to "make three tents," make the experience of glory permanent. Christian living is about being "touched" by Jesus so that the fleeting moments of glory are made permanent in bettering the lives of others. We don't build tents; we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, touch the downhearted, visit the lonely, encourage the discouraged, etc. In this way Christ touches others through us. This kind of living is eminently practical and requires a real and constant dying to self.



Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: high mountain, shone like the sun, white as light, well pleased, listen to him, Jesus . . . touched, raised from the dead

To the point: What high mountain must we climb for us to witness Jesus' transfiguration? We must climb the high mountain of listening to Jesus, the high mountain of being pleasing to him, the high mountain of opening ourselves to the touch of his Presence. When we climb this mountain, we forsake our own agenda of pitching the tent of satisfaction with our own works to enter into the glory of the Life Jesus offers us. The mountain is steep; the climb is ours to choose; the vision at the top is divine—"white as light," shining "like the sun." Can we see him?

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: God commanded Abram to leave the homeland he knew and to seek an unknown homeland that God would show him. "Abram went as the LORD directed him," and for this he was greatly blessed. Jesus' transfiguration bids us to let go of where we are (the "homeland" we know) to climb a high mountain (an unknown "homeland") that leads to new, risen, transfigured, Easter Life.

to our experience: No matter how insightful or imaginative, all human vision is limited by the boundaries of human experience. The vision of Jesus' transfiguration explodes the boundaries of human experience yet is very real and attainable. Jesus shows us the glory that is ours to come, a glory attainable because it is God's gift to those who are faithful.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Part of the "hardship" we bear as disciples (second reading) is that like Abram (first reading) we must leave behind what we know and love and journey into an unknown future. Part of the blessing of discipleship is that like Peter, James, and John in the gospel, we are given glimpses along the way of the glory which is to come. Called to be faithful to the journey and strengthened along the way by flashes of glory, we live in the in-between time of hope.

Our hope, like Abram's, like Christ's, like the apostles', lies in the awareness that the One calling us forward will be faithful to the promise. Through the trudging and the temptations (last Sunday) we see this promise shining through even now, fleeting but with overwhelming clarity (this Sunday). The promise of future glory is real and this merciful God who keeps a tender eye upon us (psalm) grants us the vision we need to keep moving on.

to psalmist preparation: As you sing these verses from Psalm 33, you express the hope fulfilled in the gospel reading. The unseen future to which Abram was called (first reading) is fully manifest in the shining face of Jesus on the mountaintop. You sing of the trust we can hold in the God who promises such a future to us. You are a beacon of hope to the assembly. How can you be this beacon also in your daily living to those who lack hope or need encouragement?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- I listen to Jesus best when I . . . I please him most when I . . . I experience his Presence when . . .
- What leads me to become unsatisfied with my own works and seek more is . . . The more I seek is . . .
- The vision that inspires and strengthens me to climb higher mountains seeking the transfigured Jesus is . . .

PRESIDERS

My preaching offers the assembly glimpses of glory while they walk through the desert of Lent whenever I . . .

DEACONS

Glimpses of Christ's glory move me to greater service of others because . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My hospitality mediates Christ's glory to those burdened whenever I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

The high mountain I must climb to be faithful to my music ministry is . . . The transfigured glory of Jesus I experience is . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

When I serve at the altar, I experience Jesus' transfigured glory through . . . when . . .

LECTORS

When my lector preparation begins with listening to God's "beloved Son," my proclamation is like . . . my daily living is like . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

I see Jesus' transfigured glory in the faces of those who come to receive Holy Communion, and this moves me to . . .

CELEBRATION

Model Penitential Act

Presider: Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to a mountaintop and was transfigured in glory before them. As we repent of our sinfulness, let us welcome God's mercy as a share in Jesus' glory . . . [pause]

Confiteor: I confess . . .

Homily Points

- Coming to see another in a new light takes effort, listening, willingness to change ourselves. Often seeing the other in a new light results from a fresh and surprising encounter. Peter, James, and John certainly had a fresh and surprising encounter with Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration. But changing themselves took growth and time. Coming down the mountain left them with much listening still to do.

- The glory of Jesus in the transfiguration foreshadows the glory to be given to all who remain faithful to him. God offers this glory; it is for us, however, to do the ongoing work of listening to Jesus, of living lives pleasing to him, of being open to his Presence. The mountain is steep; the climb is ours to choose; the vision at the top is divine—"white as light," shining "like the sun." Can we see him?

- We listen to Jesus when we are open to the suggestions of others for changing our behavior, when we take time to listen to God's word in prayer, when we allow ourselves to be strengthened by the support and encouragement of others. We are pleasing to Jesus when we live as he did. We experience Jesus' Presence in the goodness and kindness of others, in the community gathered for liturgy and prayer, in our reflective moments with those we love. Can we see him beckoning us to share in his glory? Yes!

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: The God who calls us to share in Jesus' transfigured glory will give us all we need to enter into this new Life. And so we pray.

Response:



Cantor:



For all members of the church, that they may listen intently to Jesus and come to share in his glory . . . [pause]

For all the communities of the earth, that they may be touched by God's Presence and be changed by the light of his glory . . . [pause]

For all who are in any need, that they may be filled with God's Presence and gifts . . . [pause]

For all of us, that the promise of future glory strengthen us to be faithful to our Lenten discipline . . . [pause]

Presider: Merciful God, you give us every good thing; hear these our prayers that one day we might share in the fullness of your glory. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

O God, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Gen 12:1-4a

The LORD said to Abram:

"Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.

"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you."

Abram went as the LORD directed him.

CATECHESIS

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

R. (22) Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.
He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the LORD the earth
is full.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those
who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness,
to deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.
May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

SECOND READING

2 Tim 1:8b-10

Beloved:

Bear your share of hardship for the gospel
with the strength that comes from God.

He saved us and called us to a holy life,
not according to our works
but according to his own design
and the grace bestowed on us in Christ
Jesus before time began,
but now made manifest
through the appearance of our savior
Christ Jesus,
who destroyed death and brought life
and immortality
to light through the gospel.

About Liturgy

The “new” of liturgy’s repetition: Repetition is the “stuff” of which good ritual is made. Some people see liturgy’s repetition as tedious and boring—doing the same things over and over—while others are able to see it for what it is meant to be: drawing the assembly deeper and deeper into the mystery being celebrated. Thus repetition always leads us to something new, partly because different contexts allow us different interpretations. And also partly because we are always growing; since growth makes us someone different, we “hear” and pray in new ways. Therefore, in a sense liturgy is never “repetitious”—it is always new because we are always new.

One usually thinks of liturgy’s repetition in terms of what is in the Roman Missal, but the Lectionary includes its own fortuitous repetition. For example, often a Sunday’s gospel is repeated during the early part of the next week. The first readings for the first three Sundays of Lent (creation, covenant with Abraham, the Israelites in the desert) in Year A have a close parallel (repetition) to the first three readings of the Easter Vigil. The different contexts for these similar readings draw us to interpret them in different ways. Further, these readings at the Vigil might draw us to think back to these beginning weeks of Lent and become more aware of how we have grown—how we are “new.” In this way, repetition teaches us something valuable. It is hardly boring!

About Liturgical Music

Music suggestions: “Tis Good, Lord, to Be Here” (found in most resources); “O Sun of Justice” (SS); and “O Christ, Bright Sun of Justice” (found in *Awake, My Soul*, the OCP collection of Harry Hagan hymns) would be excellent entrance hymns for this Sunday when the transfigured Christ lights the way through our Lenten journey. For the same reason, Bernadette Farrell’s “Christ Be Our Light” (found in most resources) and Ricky Manalo’s “Transfiguration” (BB) would be good choices for Communion, as would Kathleen Thomerson’s “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light” (found in most resources). In “Transform Us” (HG, RS, SS) we ask Christ to “transform us,” to “search us with revealing light,” and to “lift us from where we have fallen.” This contemporary text would be well suited for the preparation of the gifts or as a choir prelude using the David Haas choral arrangement (GIA G-5664).

MARCH 16, 2014

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

SPIRITUALITY



Reflecting on the Gospel and Living the Paschal Mystery

Key words and phrases from the gospel: lightning, white as snow, he has been raised, Jesus met them

To the point: We begin our celebration in the darkness of night. During this night, the stone is rolled back and risen Life bursts forth. At dawn, seeing the empty tomb and scurrying to announce the Good News of risen Life, the two Marys are met by Jesus. They do what anyone who encounters sheer Glory would do: they approach, embrace Jesus' feet, do him homage. This is a model for all faithful disciples who wish to announce that Jesus' risen Presence is among us.

A prayer starter: This night is like no other. Each year we confront the power of darkness as we proclaim, "Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her, ablaze with light from her eternal King" (*Exsultet*). This is the night for which we have been preparing all Lent. This is the night when we celebrate Christ's victory over death and pledge ourselves in our renewal of baptismal promises to model our lives after him. This is the night when glory shines forth like lightning and is dazzling as snow. This is the night when Jesus' risen Life is announced. This is the night when encounter with Jesus imbues us with his risen Life.

This Easter gospel begins by telling us that these first Easter events took place "[a]fter the sabbath." It is now the first day of the week; rest is over and normal work has begun. For those who encounter the glory of the risen Christ, the resurrection is not an end but a beginning. Mary Magdalene and her companion, after being told by the angel that Jesus "has been raised," are commanded to "go quickly and tell" the others what they have seen and heard. Resurrection is not a time for disciples to relax and be still; it is a time to go forth and announce a new Presence of God among us. It is a time to announce that Jesus has risen, and the glory of God appears among us like never before.

Rather than tarry at the tomb, the women indeed go as the angel bade them. On the way Jesus meets them. Mary Magdalene and Mary do what anyone who encounters sheer glory would do: they approach, embrace Jesus' feet, do him homage. This is a model for all faithful disciples who wish to announce that Jesus' risen Presence is among us.

Approach: Faithful disciples must always seek out encounters with the risen Christ in order to be assured that the Presence they bring others is, indeed, Christ's risen glory. Without this connection with Christ, one risks losing the intimate relationship with Jesus that feeds discipleship. Time in prayer and recognizing others as members of the Body of Christ are two ways we daily approach the glorious Jesus.

Embrace his feet: How quickly the women carry out Jesus' Last Supper command to do as Jesus did for the disciples! They embrace Jesus' feet and in this simple act express their self-giving habit of love. Reaching out in acts of kindness and faithfully fulfilling the duties of our own lives are two ways we daily embrace the glorious Jesus' feet.

Do him homage: In the most profound act of discipleship, the women worship the risen One. Our full, conscious, and active participation at Mass and our respecting the dignity of others are two ways we daily offer homage to the glorious Jesus. At liturgy we encounter the glorious One in his continual act of self-giving. At liturgy we learn anew that faithful discipleship means embracing his self-giving through affirming the wonder of his risen Presence in others. At liturgy we experience the glory of God's Presence and are sent to shine forth this glory to all we meet.

Gospel Matt 28:1-10; L41ABC

After the sabbath, as the first day of
the week was dawning,
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary
came to see the tomb.
And behold, there was a great
earthquake;
for an angel of the Lord descended
from heaven,
approached, rolled back the stone,
and sat upon it.
His appearance was like lightning
and his clothing was white as snow.
The guards were shaken with fear of
him
and became like dead men.
Then the angel said to the women in
reply,
"Do not be afraid!
I know that you are seeking Jesus the
crucified.
He is not here, for he has been raised
just as he said.
Come and see the place where he lay.
Then go quickly and tell his disciples,
'He has been raised from the dead,
and he is going before you to Galilee;
there you will see him.'
Behold, I have told you."

Continued in Appendix A, p. 288.

See Appendix A, p. 283-288, for the other readings.

About Liturgy: Special Features of the Rite

Easter Proclamation—the Exsultet: Into the darkness processes the deacon with the blessed, lighted Easter candle. Three times he stops to proclaim that Christ is our light. All light their candles and process through the sacred space. The Easter candle is given an adorned place of honor near the ambo. The deacon is blessed so that he “may proclaim [Christ’s] paschal praise worthily and well.” Then begins the Easter Proclamation, the *Exsultet*—so named because it begins and reiterates over and over, “Exult.” The Latin verb *exsulto* literally means to leap up frequently. On this night we cannot contain our joy: the loving, suffering servant is risen and exalted!

The *Exsultet* is our very first hymn each year in praise of the risen Christ. It recapitulates in one great song the mystery we have been celebrating during the Triduum and the very meaning of our lives as Christians. We celebrate the “wonder of [God’s] humble care for us” and God’s “charity beyond all telling.” We celebrate “when things of heaven are wed to those of earth, and divine to the human.” We celebrate the glory of Jesus “pouring out his own dear Blood” so that we might participate in his risen Life.

This great hymn must be sung with all the solemnity, reverence, and power it exhibits. It is meant to be sung by someone (ordained or not) whose voice can enable the poetic text to soar with beauty and majesty into the dark of the night. This hymn sets the tone for the next fifty days: we leap up frequently in joyous praise of the One who suffered, died, and is now risen. Alleluia!

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: On this most solemn night, our hearts are filled with the joy of our risen Lord. In the midst of our Easter praise, let us humbly place our needs before God.

Response: 
Lord, hear our prayer.

Cantor: 
we pray to the Lord,

That all members of the church may embrace the glory of risen Life and be Christ’s risen Presence for all they meet . . . [pause]

That all peoples of the world rejoice in new Life offered by God . . . [pause]

That the sorrowing and downtrodden be lifted up by the promise of a share in Jesus’ risen Life . . . [pause]

That each of us here, filled with Easter joy, faithfully announce the Good News of salvation to those we meet . . . [pause]

Presider: Glorious God, you raised up your only Son to be exalted forever: hear these our prayers that one day we might share with him the glory of everlasting Life. We ask this through the risen Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

O God, who make this most sacred night radiant with the glory of the Lord’s Resurrection, stir up in your Church a spirit of adoption, so that, renewed in body and mind, we may render you undivided service. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FOR REFLECTION

- For me, out of the darkness of this night comes . . .
- I am most aware of Christ’s risen and glorious Presence within me when . . .
- I scurry to announce the Good News that the risen Christ dwells within and among us by . . .

Homily Points

• Good news cannot be contained. We hurry to call our best friend. We run home to tell the family. Good news must be shared because it wells up in us and bursts us out of ourselves. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary in this Easter gospel cannot contain what the angel told them: “he has been raised.”

• What gets us excited about the news of the resurrection? The challenge of hearing this gospel is that the Good News of the resurrection is not simply old news for us because we’ve heard it before. This gospel calls forth from us the same response of joy, enthusiasm, and telling others as that first Easter brought forth from the two Marys. We share in the fullness of Easter glory only if, like the two Marys, we focus on the fact that the Lord is risen and announce this Good News to others. The measure of our glory is the strength and frequency of our encounters with the risen Lord that bring forth from us resounding Alleluias.

At the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter, April 19, 2014

FIRST READING

Gen 1:1-2:2

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters.

Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." Thus evening came, and morning followed—the first day.

Then God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other."

And so it happened: God made the dome, and it separated the water above the dome from the water below it. God called the dome "the sky." Evening came, and morning followed—the second day.

Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear." And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared. God called the dry land "the earth," and the basin of the water he called "the sea."

God saw how good it was.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it."

And so it happened: the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it.

God saw how good it was.

Evening came, and morning followed—the third day.

Then God said: "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the fixed times, the days and the years,

and serve as luminaries in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth."

And so it happened: God made the two great lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night; and he made the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was. Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day.

Then God said, "Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky."

And so it happened: God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of swimming creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw how good it was, and God blessed them, saying,

"Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth." Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals of all kinds."

And so it happened: God made all kinds of wild animals, all kinds of cattle, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. God saw how good it was.

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground."

God created man in his image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air,

and all the living things that move on the earth."

God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food."

And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. Since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing, he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken.

or

Gen 1:1, 26-31a

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground."

God created man in his image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth."

God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground,

I give all the green plants for food." And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.

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RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35

R. (20) Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!
You are clothed with majesty and glory,
robed in light as with a cloak.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

You fixed the earth upon its foundation,
not to be moved forever;
with the ocean, as with a garment, you
covered it;
above the mountains the waters stood.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

You send forth springs into the watercourses
that wind among the mountains.

Beside them the birds of heaven dwell;
from among the branches they send forth
their song.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

You water the mountains from your palace;
the earth is replete with the fruit of your
works.

You raise grass for the cattle,
and vegetation for man's use,
producing bread from the earth.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

How manifold are your works, O LORD!
In wisdom you have wrought them all—
the earth is full of your creatures.
Bless the LORD, O my soul!

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

or

Ps 33:4-5, 6-7, 12-13, 20 and 22

R. (5b) The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.
He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were
made;
by the breath of his mouth all their host.
He gathers the waters of the sea as in a
flask;
in cellars he confines the deep.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.
Blessed the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people he has chosen for his own
inheritance.

From heaven the LORD looks down;
he sees all mankind.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.
May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.

R. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

SECOND READING

Gen 22:1-18

God put Abraham to the test.
He called to him, "Abraham!"
"Here I am," he replied.
Then God said:

"Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom
you love,
and go to the land of Moriah.

There you shall offer him up as a holocaust
on a height that I will point out to you."

Early the next morning Abraham saddled his
donkey,
took with him his son Isaac and two of his
servants as well,
and with the wood that he had cut for the
holocaust,
set out for the place of which God had told
him.

On the third day Abraham got sight of the
place from afar.

Then he said to his servants:

"Both of you stay here with the donkey,
while the boy and I go on over yonder.

We will worship and then come back to you."
Thereupon Abraham took the wood for the
holocaust

and laid it on his son Isaac's shoulders,
while he himself carried the fire and the
knife.

As the two walked on together, Isaac spoke to
his father Abraham:

"Father!" Isaac said.

"Yes, son," he replied.

Isaac continued, "Here are the fire and the
wood,

but where is the sheep for the holocaust?"
"Son," Abraham answered,

"God himself will provide the sheep for the
holocaust."

Then the two continued going forward.

When they came to the place of which God
had told him,

Abraham built an altar there and arranged
the wood on it.

Next he tied up his son Isaac,
and put him on top of the wood on the altar.

Then he reached out and took the knife to
slaughter his son.

But the LORD's messenger called to him from
heaven,

"Abraham, Abraham!"

"Here I am," he answered.

"Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the
messenger.

"Do not do the least thing to him.

I know now how devoted you are to God,
since you did not withhold from me your
own beloved son."

As Abraham looked about,
he spied a ram caught by its horns in the
thicket.

So he went and took the ram
and offered it up as a holocaust in place of
his son.

Abraham named the site Yahweh-yireh;
hence people now say, "On the mountain
the LORD will see."

Again the LORD's messenger called to
Abraham from heaven and said:

"I swear by myself, declares the LORD,
that because you acted as you did
in not withholding from me your beloved
son,

I will bless you abundantly
and make your descendants as countless
as the stars of the sky and the sands of the
seashore;

your descendants shall take possession
of the gates of their enemies,
and in your descendants all the nations of
the earth

shall find blessing—
all this because you obeyed my
command."

or

Gen 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

God put Abraham to the test.

He called to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

Then God said:

"Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom
you love,

and go to the land of Moriah.

There you shall offer him up as a holocaust
on a height that I will point out to you."

When they came to the place of which God
had told him,

Abraham built an altar there and arranged
the wood on it.

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Then he reached out and took the knife to
slaughter his son.

But the LORD's messenger called to him from
heaven,

"Abraham, Abraham!"

"Here I am," he answered.

"Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the
messenger.

"Do not do the least thing to him.

I know now how devoted you are to God,
since you did not withhold from me your
own beloved son."

As Abraham looked about,
he spied a ram caught by its horns in the
thicket.

So he went and took the ram
and offered it up as a holocaust in place of
his son.

Again the LORD's messenger called to
Abraham from heaven and said:
"I swear by myself, declares the LORD,
that because you acted as you did
in not withholding from me your beloved son,
I will bless you abundantly
and make your descendants as countless
as the stars of the sky and the sands of the
seashore;
your descendants shall take possession
of the gates of their enemies,
and in your descendants all the nations of
the earth
shall find blessing—
all this because you obeyed my command."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

R. (1) You are my inheritance, O Lord.

O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,
you it is who hold fast my lot.

I set the LORD ever before me;
with him at my right hand I shall not be
disturbed.

R. You are my inheritance, O Lord.

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,
my body, too, abides in confidence;
because you will not abandon my soul to the
netherworld,
nor will you suffer your faithful one to
undergo corruption.

R. You are my inheritance, O Lord.

You will show me the path to life,
fullness of joys in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

R. You are my inheritance, O Lord.

THIRD READING

Exod 14:15-15:1

The LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying
out to me?"

Tell the Israelites to go forward.

And you, lift up your staff and, with hand
outstretched over the sea,

split the sea in two,
that the Israelites may pass through it on
dry land.

But I will make the Egyptians so obstinate
that they will go in after them.

Then I will receive glory through Pharaoh
and all his army,

his chariots and charioteers.

The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD,
when I receive glory through Pharaoh
and his chariots and charioteers."

The angel of God, who had been leading
Israel's camp,
now moved and went around behind them.
The column of cloud also, leaving the front,
took up its place behind them,
so that it came between the camp of the
Egyptians
and that of Israel.

But the cloud now became dark, and thus the
night passed
without the rival camps coming any closer
together all night long.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the
sea,
and the LORD swept the sea
with a strong east wind throughout the night
and so turned it into dry land.

When the water was thus divided,
the Israelites marched into the midst of the
sea on dry land,
with the water like a wall to their right and
to their left.

The Egyptians followed in pursuit;
all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and
charioteers went after them
right into the midst of the sea.

In the night watch just before dawn
the LORD cast through the column of the
fiery cloud
upon the Egyptian force a glance that
threw it into a panic;
and he so clogged their chariot wheels
that they could hardly drive.

With that the Egyptians sounded the retreat
before Israel,
because the LORD was fighting for them
against the Egyptians.

Then the LORD told Moses, "Stretch out your
hand over the sea,
that the water may flow back upon the
Egyptians,
upon their chariots and their charioteers."
So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea,
and at dawn the sea flowed back to its
normal depth.

The Egyptians were fleeing head on toward
the sea,
when the LORD hurled them into its midst.
As the water flowed back,
it covered the chariots and the charioteers
of Pharaoh's whole army
which had followed the Israelites into the sea.
Not a single one of them escaped.
But the Israelites had marched on dry land
through the midst of the sea,
with the water like a wall to their right and
to their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel on that day
from the power of the Egyptians.
When Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on
the seashore
and beheld the great power that the LORD
had shown against the Egyptians,
they feared the LORD and believed in him
and in his servant Moses.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song
to the LORD:
I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously
triumphant;
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Exod 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18

R. (1b) Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered
himself in glory.

I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously
triumphant;
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.

He is my God, I praise him;
the God of my father, I extol him.

R. Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered
himself in glory.

The LORD is a warrior,
LORD is his name!
Pharaoh's chariots and army he hurled into
the sea;
the elite of his officers were submerged in
the Red Sea.

R. Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered
himself in glory.

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The flood waters covered them,
they sank into the depths like a stone.
Your right hand, O LORD, magnificent in
power,
your right hand, O LORD, has shattered the
enemy.

R. Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered
himself in glory.

You brought in the people you redeemed
and planted them on the mountain of your
inheritance—
the place where you made your seat, O LORD,
the sanctuary, LORD, which your hands
established.
The LORD shall reign forever and ever.

R. Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered
himself in glory.

FOURTH READING

Isa 54:5-14

The One who has become your husband is
your Maker;
his name is the LORD of hosts;
your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,
called God of all the earth.

The LORD calls you back,
like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
a wife married in youth and then cast off,
says your God.

For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great tenderness I will take you
back.

In an outburst of wrath, for a moment
I hid my face from you;
but with enduring love I take pity on you,
says the LORD, your redeemer.

This is for me like the days of Noah,
when I swore that the waters of Noah
should never again deluge the earth;
so I have sworn not to be angry with you,
or to rebuke you.

Though the mountains leave their place
and the hills be shaken,
my love shall never leave you
nor my covenant of peace be shaken,
says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

O afflicted one, storm-battered and unconsolated,
I lay your pavements in carnelians,
and your foundations in sapphires;

I will make your battlements of rubies,
your gates of carbuncles,
and all your walls of precious stones.

All your children shall be taught by the LORD,
and great shall be the peace of your children.
In justice shall you be established,

far from the fear of oppression,
where destruction cannot come near you.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13

R. (2a) I will praise you, Lord, for you have
rescued me.

I will extol you, O LORD, for you drew me clear
and did not let my enemies rejoice over me.
O LORD, you brought me up from the
netherworld;
you preserved me from among those going
down into the pit.

R. I will praise you, Lord, for you have
rescued me.

Sing praise to the LORD, you his faithful ones,
and give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger lasts but a moment;
a lifetime, his good will.
At nightfall, weeping enters in,
but with the dawn, rejoicing.

R. I will praise you, Lord, for you have
rescued me.

Hear, O LORD, and have pity on me;
O LORD, be my helper.

You changed my mourning into dancing;
O LORD, my God, forever will I give you
thanks.

R. I will praise you, Lord, for you have
rescued me.

FIFTH READING

Isa 55:1-11

Thus says the LORD:
All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk!

Why spend your money for what is not bread,
your wages for what fails to satisfy?

Heed me, and you shall eat well,
you shall delight in rich fare.

Come to me heedfully,
listen, that you may have life.

I will renew with you the everlasting
covenant,
the benefits assured to David.

As I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander of nations,
so shall you summon a nation you knew not,
and nations that knew you not shall run
to you,

because of the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you.

Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call him while he is near.

Let the scoundrel forsake his way,
and the wicked man his thoughts;
let him turn to the LORD for mercy;
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
As high as the heavens are above the earth,
so high are my ways above your ways
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

For just as from the heavens
the rain and snow come down
and do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
giving seed to the one who sows
and bread to the one who eats,
so shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
my word shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Isa 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

R. (3) You will draw water joyfully from the
springs of salvation.

God indeed is my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation.

R. You will draw water joyfully from the
springs of salvation.

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.

R. You will draw water joyfully from the
springs of salvation.

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious
achievement;
let this be known throughout all the earth.
Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel!

R. You will draw water joyfully from the
springs of salvation.

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SIXTH READING

Bar 3:9-15, 32-4:4

Hear, O Israel, the commandments of life:
listen, and know prudence!
How is it, Israel,
that you are in the land of your foes,
grown old in a foreign land,
defiled with the dead,
accounted with those destined for the
netherworld?
You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom!
Had you walked in the way of God,
you would have dwelt in enduring peace.
Learn where prudence is,
where strength, where understanding;
that you may know also
where are length of days, and life,
where light of the eyes, and peace.
Who has found the place of wisdom,
who has entered into her treasuries?

The One who knows all things knows her;
he has probed her by his knowledge—
the One who established the earth for all
time,
and filled it with four-footed beasts;
he who dismisses the light, and it departs,
calls it, and it obeys him trembling;
before whom the stars at their posts
shine and rejoice;
when he calls them, they answer, "Here we
are!"
shining with joy for their Maker.
Such is our God;
no other is to be compared to him:
he has traced out the whole way of
understanding,
and has given her to Jacob, his servant,
to Israel, his beloved son.

Since then she has appeared on earth,
and moved among people.
She is the book of the precepts of God,
the law that endures forever;
all who cling to her will live,
but those will die who forsake her.
Turn, O Jacob, and receive her:
walk by her light toward splendor.
Give not your glory to another,
your privileges to an alien race.
Blessed are we, O Israel;
for what pleases God is known to us!

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11

R. (John 6:68c) Lord, you have the words of
everlasting life.

The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul;

the decree of the LORD is trustworthy,
giving wisdom to the simple.

R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

The precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the command of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eye.

R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true,
all of them just.

R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

They are more precious than gold,
than a heap of purest gold;
sweeter also than syrup
or honey from the comb.

R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

SEVENTH READING

Ezek 36:16-17a, 18-28

The word of the LORD came to me, saying:
Son of man, when the house of Israel lived
in their land,
they defiled it by their conduct and deeds.
Therefore I poured out my fury upon them
because of the blood that they poured out
on the ground,
and because they defiled it with idols.
I scattered them among the nations,
dispersing them over foreign lands;
according to their conduct and deeds I
judged them.

But when they came among the nations
wherever they came,
they served to profane my holy name,
because it was said of them: "These are the
people of the LORD,
yet they had to leave their land."

So I have relented because of my holy name
which the house of Israel profaned
among the nations where they came.

Therefore say to the house of Israel: Thus
says the Lord GOD:
Not for your sakes do I act, house of Israel,
but for the sake of my holy name,
which you profaned among the nations to
which you came.

I will prove the holiness of my great name,
profaned among the nations,
in whose midst you have profaned it.
Thus the nations shall know that I am the
LORD, says the Lord GOD,
when in their sight I prove my holiness
through you.

For I will take you away from among the
nations,

gather you from all the foreign lands,
and bring you back to your own land.
I will sprinkle clean water upon you
to cleanse you from all your impurities,
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.
I will give you a new heart and place a new
spirit within you,
taking from your bodies your stony hearts
and giving you natural hearts.
I will put my spirit within you and make you
live by my statutes,
careful to observe my decrees.
You shall live in the land I gave your fathers;
you shall be my people, and I will be your
God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 42:3, 5; 43:3, 4 (when baptism is celebrated)

R. (42:2) Like a deer that longs for running
streams, my soul longs for you, my God.

Athirst is my soul for God, the living God.
When shall I go and behold the face of God?

R. Like a deer that longs for running streams,
my soul longs for you, my God.

I went with the throng
and led them in procession to the house of
God,
amid loud cries of joy and thanksgiving,
with the multitude keeping festival.

R. Like a deer that longs for running streams,
my soul longs for you, my God.

Send forth your light and your fidelity;
they shall lead me on
and bring me to your holy mountain,
to your dwelling-place.

R. Like a deer that longs for running streams,
my soul longs for you, my God.

Then will I go in to the altar of God,
the God of my gladness and joy;
then will I give you thanks upon the harp,
O God, my God!

R. Like a deer that longs for running streams,
my soul longs for you, my God.

or

Isa 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6 (when baptism is not
celebrated)

R. (3) You will draw water joyfully from the
springs of salvation.

God indeed is my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation.

R. You will draw water joyfully from the
springs of salvation.

At the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter, April 19, 2014

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.

R. You will draw water joyfully from the
springs of salvation.

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious
achievement,
let this be known throughout all the earth.
Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel!

R. You will draw water joyfully from the
springs of salvation.

or

Ps 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19

R. (12a) Create a clean heart in me, O God.

A clean heart create for me, O God,
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.

Cast me not out from your presence,
and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Give me back the joy of your salvation,
and a willing spirit sustain in me.

I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners shall return to you.

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

For you are not pleased with sacrifices;
should I offer a holocaust, you would not
accept it.

My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit;
a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you
will not spurn.

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

EPISTLE

Rom 6:3-11

Brothers and sisters:

Are you unaware that we who were baptized
into Christ Jesus
were baptized into his death?

We were indeed buried with him through
baptism into death,
so that, just as Christ was raised from the
dead
by the glory of the Father,
we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him
through a death like his,
we shall also be united with him in the
resurrection.

We know that our old self was crucified with
him,
so that our sinful body might be done away
with,

that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.
For a dead person has been absolved from
sin.

If, then, we have died with Christ,
we believe that we shall also live with
him.

We know that Christ, raised from the dead,
dies no more;
death no longer has power over him.

As to his death, he died to sin once and for
all;
as to his life, he lives for God.

Consequently, you too must think of
yourselves as being dead to sin
and living for God in Christ Jesus.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

Let the house of Israel say,
"His mercy endures forever."

R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

"The right hand of the LORD has struck with
power;

the right hand of the LORD is exalted.

I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD."

R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (cont.)

Matt 28:1-10; L41ABC

Then they went away quickly from the tomb,
fearful yet overjoyed,
and ran to announce this to his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them.

They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage.

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid.

Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee,
and there they will see me."

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 14:6

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the way, the truth and the life, says the Lord; no one comes to the Father, except through me.

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel John 14:1-12; L52A

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled.

You have faith in God; have faith also in me.

In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.

If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come back again and take you to myself,

so that where I am you also may be.

Where I am going you know the way.”

Thomas said to him,

“Master, we do not know where you are going;

how can we know the way?”

Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me.

If you know me, then you will also know my Father.

From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him,

“Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you for so long a time

and you still do not know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?



Reflecting on the Gospel

Short-term leave-takings are usually not given much thought—husband and wife kiss each other before leaving for work and hug and kiss the children off to school. Most long-term leave-takings are pretty difficult, especially when those parting company love each other deeply. It is always heartrending to hear military families talk about the leave-taking of their loved one, how much a hole in the family life this absence creates. On the other hand, even perfect strangers get teary-eyed watching young children run excitedly up to their soldier-parent at the airport, or watching a long-deployed ship anchor in safe harbor with the sailors lined along the decks waving exuberant greetings. Long-term leave-takings leave us sad; homecomings bring joy to our hearts.

It is no surprise to us, then, to hear in this Sunday’s gospel the worry and confusion of the disciples. Jesus is talking to them about leaving, and although he promises to return and take them to himself, these are hardly comforting words. They probably don’t even hear them. What they hear is that Jesus is leaving. They are lost. They do not “know the way.”

At the same time, Jesus’ words in this gospel from the Last Supper discourse are reassuring ones: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Yet Thomas and Philip, who hear Jesus also tell them that he is leaving, are not reassured and question him anxiously. The leap from the Jesus at the Last Supper to the Jesus after the resurrection is one giant step, one the disciples have not yet taken. These disciples cannot at this point understand that Jesus’ leave-taking is not permanent; he is not abandoning his disciples. They have not

come to understand what it means for Jesus to rise from the dead.

But *we* have taken this leap. We are an Easter people. We have received the Holy Spirit who empowers us to know Jesus, through him to know the Father, and to do the works of Jesus. Believing this mitigates all troubles, all anxiety. Believing this helps us know the way to Jesus and to the Father. The gospel is challenging us to enter into a profound relationship with the risen Jesus, which ultimately means we share a profound relationship with the Father as well, through their Spirit of love.

Living the Paschal Mystery

The root of all religious desire is union with God. The bold claim of Christianity is that God meets this desire by coming to us in Christ, and we come to God in Christ: “No one comes to the Father except through me.”

As the Lectionary moves us toward Pentecost, we find ourselves more and more challenged to encounter the risen Jesus, to believe deeply that he is risen and dwells among and within us. We encounter Jesus and come to greater belief by doing the works of Jesus and by recognizing the risen Jesus in the other. The very practical challenge here is that our baptism plunges us not only into a relationship with the triune God but also into a profound relationship with each other. Therefore, our belief in the resurrection and the Good News of salvation is played out concretely in the way we treat others in justice, mercy, forgiveness, and love.

Relationships always make demands on us. Moreover, we cannot have a relationship with Jesus and the Father without relationships with each other. That is both the challenge and the good news. It is also the promise that Jesus’ leave-taking is not long-term. He is always with us.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 292.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: Do not . . . be troubled, I am going, I am the way, know my Father, how can we know the way?, do the works

To the point: Jesus' words in this gospel from the Last Supper discourse are reassuring ones: "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Yet Thomas and Philip, who hear Jesus also tell them that he is leaving, are not reassured and question him anxiously. The leap from the Jesus at the Last Supper to the Jesus after the resurrection is one giant step, one the disciples have not yet taken. But *we* have taken this leap. We are an Easter people. We have received the Holy Spirit who empowers us to know Jesus, through him to know the Father, and to do the works of Jesus. Believing this mitigates all troubles, all anxiety.

Connecting the Gospel

to the second reading: Peter can confidently invite people to "Come to [Christ]" and name them "a people of [Christ's] own" because he is writing from an Easter faith; he has encountered the risen Lord. He has made the leap that the troubled and anxious disciples in the gospel have not yet made.

to our experience: Being troubled and anxious is a fact of our stress-filled lives. "Do not be troubled" the surgeon says to someone before major surgery; "Do not be troubled" a parent says to a child wakened by a nightmare; "Do not be troubled" . . . The only way we can truly not be troubled is by placing our trust in Jesus, "the way and the truth and the life."

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: This Sunday's gospel depicts the disciples still mystified about Jesus even after years of intimate interaction with him. The first reading reveals the early church experiencing animosities among themselves. And the second reading indicates that faith in Christ is a choice some will make and others will not. The way of faith, then, is not so straightforward.

In the midst of these strifes and struggles, the psalm reminds us to trust in God whose word and works stand eternally trustworthy. And the gospel invites us to trust in Jesus who will show us the way we are to live. We needn't be troubled at Jesus' absence, then, for we have all the guidance we need. We are a chosen, holy, priestly people (second reading) who know the way we are to go (gospel) and have the capability to walk it. We have only to trust in God (psalm refrain) and to follow Jesus (gospel).

to psalmist preparation: These verses from Psalm 33 convey utmost trust in God whose word is true, whose works are reliable, and whose kindness is granted to all who hope. In the gospel Jesus invites you to place this trust in him, for whoever knows him knows God. How has your celebration of this Easter season helped you grow in your knowledge of Jesus? What struggles with faith in him do you still experience? Who/what helps you to trust in him even in the midst of these struggles?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- When my heart is troubled, Jesus . . .
- What I know of the Father because I know Jesus is . . .
- The works of Jesus I do are . . .

PRESIDERS

My ministry helps those who come to me anxious and troubled when I . . .

DEACONS

My serving others mitigates the troubles and anxiety of those whom I am called to serve when I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

The manner of my greeting paves the way for assembly members to know Jesus more deeply and so know the Father more fully when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

In my music making, the works of Jesus I do are . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

I come to know Jesus, and therefore the Father, better through my serving when I . . .

LECTORS

My proclamation helps assembly members encounter the risen Lord and ease any troubles and anxiety when I . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

My Easter faith touches those to whom I bring Holy Communion and leads them to . . .

CELEBRATION

Model Rite for the Blessing and Sprinkling of Water

Presider: By asking God to bless and by sprinkling this water we renew our baptism by which we receive the Holy Spirit who empowers us to know Jesus and do his works. Let us prepare ourselves to encounter Jesus in his Spirit . . . [pause]


Continue with the third lesson, "Singing Easter Time," for the blessing of water in The Roman Missal, Appendix II]


Homily Points

- We often make leaps of faith; for example, we move to a distant state confident we will land a better job, we accept a marriage proposal confident that the love will last, we send the children off to school confident that they will be safe. Following Jesus often takes a leap of faith, from believing he is present to us to confidence that we can continue his works. When we are faithful, no trouble or anxiety can swerve us from the way to the Father through Jesus.
- We know who God is because we have come to know who Jesus is; we know who Jesus is because we have seen him in the works done by those who believe in him. The revelation of who God is begun in the incarnation of Jesus continues in the incarnation of Jesus' works of love, mercy, healing, reconciliation, justice, peace in the lives of his faithful followers. We know the way to the Father because we see these faithful followers walking that way, and we choose to walk with them.
- To be an Easter people means that we are open to the Holy Spirit within who empowers us to do the works of Jesus. We are empowered to forgive those who have hurt us, to lift up the lives of the poor and suffering, to work for peace and justice, to encourage each other in difficult times. Although the way is not always easy, and we will meet challenges as did Jesus, we know we do not walk alone. When we are faithful, no trouble or anxiety can swerve us from the way to the Father through Jesus.

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: We turn to our loving God, and present our troubles, anxieties, and needs.

Response: 
Lord, hear our prayer.

Cantor: 
we pray to the Lord,

That all members of the church may faithfully do the works of Jesus, even in face of trouble and anxiety . . . [pause]

That world leaders always guide their people in the ways of God . . . [pause]

That those who are homeless or have lost their way in life may find solace in a loving God . . . [pause]

That all of us here gathered may grow in the Spirit of Jesus within us who empowers us to do good . . . [pause]

Presider: Loving God, you call us to be your holy people and empower us to do the work of your Son: hear these our prayers that one day we might dwell with you forever. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

Almighty ever-living God,
constantly accomplish the Paschal
Mystery within us,
that those you were pleased to make new
in Holy Baptism
may, under your protective care, bear
much fruit
and come to the joys of life eternal.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Acts 6:1-7

As the number of disciples continued to grow,
the Hellenists complained against the
Hebrews
because their widows
were being neglected in the daily
distribution.
So the Twelve called together the
community of the disciples and said,
"It is not right for us to neglect the word
of God to serve at table.
Brothers, select from among you seven
reputable men,
filled with the Spirit and wisdom,
whom we shall appoint to this task,
whereas we shall devote ourselves to
prayer
and to the ministry of the word."
The proposal was acceptable to the whole
community,
so they chose Stephen, a man filled with
faith and the Holy Spirit,
also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon,
Parmenas,
and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to
Judaism.
They presented these men to the apostles
who prayed and laid hands on them.
The word of God continued to spread,
and the number of the disciples in
Jerusalem increased greatly;
even a large group of priests were
becoming obedient to the faith.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19

R: (22) Lord, let your mercy be on us, as
we place our trust in you.
or: **R:** Alleluia.

CATECHESIS

Exult, you just, in the LORD;
praise from the upright is fitting.
Give thanks to the LORD on the harp;
with the ten-stringed lyre chant his
praises.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we
place our trust in you.
or: **R.** Alleluia.

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.
He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the LORD the earth
is full.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place
our trust in you.
or: **R.** Alleluia.

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those
who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness,
to deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place
our trust in you.
or: **R.** Alleluia.

SECOND READING

1 Pet 2:4-9

Beloved:

Come to him, a living stone, rejected by
human beings
but chosen and precious in the sight of
God,
and, like living stones,
let yourselves be built into a spiritual
house
to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual
sacrifices
acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For it says in Scripture:

*Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion,
a cornerstone, chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in it shall not be
put to shame.*

Therefore, its value is for you who have
faith, but for those without faith:

*The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,
and*

*A stone that will make people stumble,
and a rock that will make them fall.*

They stumble by disobeying the word, as
is their destiny.

You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood,
a holy nation, a people of his own,
so that you may announce the praises"
of him
who called you out of darkness into his
wonderful light.

About Liturgy

Inclusive language and "Father": Inclusive language is a knotty issue for those in the English-speaking world. This Sunday's gospel (and the next two Sundays) from John may be quite offensive to some because of John's propensity to have Jesus address God as his "Father." To excise out the language would be to destroy the message of the gospel. The only way out of the impasse is for us to hear the language "Father" metaphorically, trying to capture the personal relationship among the Persons of the Trinity and with us that John is trying to convey. To substitute another word (e.g., "Creator") would not capture the closeness of the relationship. All such language about God is really "anthropomorphic"; that is, the language tries to capture a mystery about God using human experiences and terms when, in fact, human categories are never adequate in talking about God. One way to try and minimize the hurt this androcentric language causes some people is to make sure to use horizontal inclusive language in all parish communication and in the texts of the liturgy that are composed by the local community (e.g., invocations at the penitential act, introductions, homilies, prayer of the faithful).

About Liturgical Music

Music suggestions: The readings for this Sunday invite us to contemplate and deepen the intimacy we share with the person of Christ. "You Are the Way" (W4, WC, WS) responds directly to Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life and would be suitable during the preparation of the gifts. Another hymn that does the same is "Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life" (W4). The text is taken from the writings of the seventeenth century British poet George Herbert. With but one exception Herbert uses words of only a single syllable throughout the text to express the reality that the disciple and Christ are one, bound in a mystical union that is at once profound and utterly simple. This hymn would be appropriate during the preparation of the gifts or as an assembly song after Communion. A strong recessional song would be Herman Stuempfle's "Christ, the Way We're Called to Follow" (W4).

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 6:51

R: Alleluia, alleluia.
I am the living bread that came down from heaven,
says the Lord;
whoever eats this bread will live forever.
R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 6:51-58; L167A

Jesus said to the Jewish crowds:

“I am the living bread
that came down from
heaven;
whoever eats this bread will
live forever;
and the bread that I will give
is my flesh for the life of the
world.”

The Jews quarreled among
themselves, saying,

“How can this man give us his flesh
to eat?”

Jesus said to them,

“Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of
Man and drink his blood,
you do not have life within you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my
blood

has eternal life,
and I will raise him on the last day.

For my flesh is true food,
and my blood is true drink.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my
blood

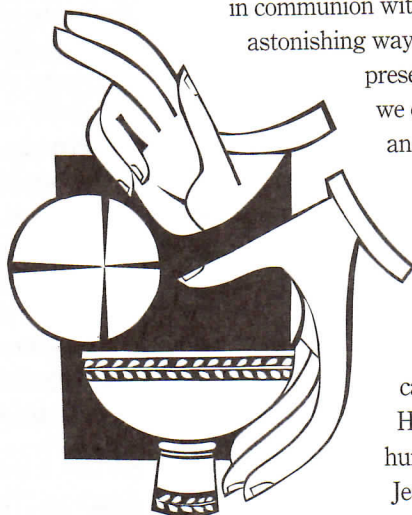
remains in me and I in him.

Just as the living Father sent me
and I have life because of the Father,
so also the one who feeds on me
will have life because of me.

This is the bread that came down from
heaven.

Unlike your ancestors who ate and still
died,

whoever eats this bread will live
forever.”



Reflecting on the Gospel

“Forever” is a very long time! So long, in fact, that it is not measurable. For little children, “forever” is as long as it takes for their birthday party to begin. For youth, “forever” is as long as it takes for them to be able to drive on their own. For adults, “forever” is as long as it takes to pay for a home, achieve job security, have a well-heeled 401(k). Still, these “forevers” are measurable; time passes. In this gospel Jesus asserts twice (at the beginning and again at the end) that “whoever eats this bread will live forever.” This forever is not a measurable forever and cannot be grasped by passing time. This forever is Life in communion with Jesus that never ends. This gospel presents in a most astonishing way how we participate in Jesus’ forever, in eternal Life. It also presents in a most astonishing way the very core of the mystery we celebrate today—the mystery of Jesus’ giving us his flesh and blood as our eternal food and drink.

Jesus’ declaration that he is the “bread that came down from heaven” grounds his further declaration that those who eat “this bread will live forever.” Heaven is a state of forever; those who eat the One come down from heaven will be like he—in a state of forever. This lofty promise is no pie-in-the-sky dreaming. It is real because Jesus himself has passed from this life to eternal glory. His humanity has risen and now lives forever. It is this risen humanity that is our nourishment for eternal Life.

Jesus is the divine Word made flesh—a flesh and blood now given to us for food and drink so that we live in communion with him. The Greek word for “flesh” in this gospel is the same Greek word (*sarx*) the evangelist John uses to describe the incarnation: “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us . . .” (John 1:14). John suggests a parallel between Jesus’ coming down from heaven at the incarnation and Jesus coming down from heaven at the Eucharist. Both cases of “coming down” require self-emptying, self-giving. The core of the mystery of the incarnation is the Son’s self-giving that is our salvation. The core of the mystery of Eucharist is the Son’s self-giving that is our eternal Life. Incarnation and Eucharist are two sides of the same mystery of Jesus’ self-giving.

The gospel for this Sunday makes clear to us that Jesus gave himself over and over: at the incarnation, in self-sacrifice on the cross, in the self-giving of his very flesh and blood as food for us to eat and drink that brings us to eternal Life. Jesus’ self-giving is eternal Life-giving. For us.

Living the Paschal Mystery

It is no happenstance that self-giving is a necessary constituent of Eucharist—both in terms of Jesus’ giving himself as food for us and our giving ourselves to each other for the common good. It is also no happenstance that Eucharist is a share in the eschatological messianic banquet. Eucharist eloquently spells out the paschal mystery—self-giving (dying) and messianic banquet (rising). Eucharist nourishes us and gives us the strength to choose self-giving sacrifice as a way of living, and this is the only way to achieve eternal Life. No wonder we call ourselves a eucharistic people, and no wonder Eucharist defines who we are as those baptized into Christ. By sharing in Jesus’ flesh and blood we share in his cross and resurrection.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: bread that came down from heaven, whoever eats this bread will live forever, Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him

To the point: Jesus' declaration that he is the "bread that came down from heaven" grounds his further declaration that those who eat "this bread will live forever." Jesus is the divine Word made flesh—a flesh and blood now given to us for food and drink so that we live in communion with him. The core of the mystery of Eucharist is the Son's self-giving that is our eternal Life.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: The perishable bread God sends from heaven sustains the people who will themselves eventually perish. The promise of the Eucharist is that Jesus feeds us with imperishable food that is his very self so that we remain in him and live forever.

to our experience: We take in food for the sake of nourishment and pleasure—we receive sustenance and delight. The food Jesus gives us, however, is for more than sustenance and delight—it is an invitation to receive so that we might give as he does.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: In the first reading Moses admonishes the Israelites never to forget all that God has done for them. God has freed them from slavery, directed their steps through the desert, taught them patiently to obey the commands of the covenant, and, in the midst of great hunger, fed them with a "food unknown" to their ancestors.

In the gospel Jesus also offers a food previously unknown on earth, his very flesh and blood to eat and drink. Jesus' immediate hearers are stunned by his words and become divided and fractious (gospel). But we who believe in his words and choose to partake of his flesh become one with him and with each other (second reading). We participate in the very mystery of Christ and become his Body. We eat the "best of wheat" (psalm) and are born into eternal Life.

to psalmist preparation: God fills you "with the best of wheat" in the Eucharist, the very Body and Blood of Jesus. Take time this week to thank God for the gift of the Eucharist and for the union with Christ (gospel) and with all the members of the Body of Christ (second reading) the Eucharist brings. Then you will truly "Praise the Lord" with full heart when you sing this psalm.

ASSEMBLY &

FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- As I process to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, I think about . . . I wish I would think about . . .
- Receiving Holy Communion strengthens my relationship with Christ in that . . . It strengthens my relationship with others in that . . .
- I am most aware that Holy Communion is a foretaste of eternal Life when . . .

PRESIDERS

In the midst of the difficult demands of ministry, what helps me move beyond the doing to a self-giving that leads others to new Life is . . .

DEACONS

My serving ministry is a Christlike self-giving when I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

The manner of my hospitality genuinely reflects Jesus' self-giving when . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

My music making brings Life to others when I . . . It leads others to communion when I . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My service is truly eucharistic (that is, an act of self-giving in love) when I . . .

LECTORS

The Word prepares me to receive the Body and Blood of Christ by . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

In both distributing and receiving Holy Communion, I am most aware that this is for eternal Life when I . . .

CELEBRATION

Model Penitential Act

Presider: Today we celebrate the gift that Jesus gives us in the Eucharist—his very Self as our food and drink. Let us pause and reflect on how we have been nourished by this gift and strengthened for our own self-giving . . . [pause]

Lord Jesus, you are the living bread that came down from heaven: Lord . . .

Christ Jesus, you are our food and drink for eternal Life: Christ . . .

Lord Jesus, you are the Word made flesh for our salvation: Lord . . .

Homily Points

- On occasion, we find ourselves exclaiming, “This baby is so cute I could eat her [or him] up.” We are enticed by loveliness, innocence, and responsiveness to take the baby in, to bring the baby to ourselves, to want to be one with the baby. This expression reveals the connection we naturally sense exists between eating and communion.
- Why does Jesus want us to eat his flesh and drink his blood? Not because he is cute! But because he is the bread come down from heaven. Because in his flesh divinity took on the fullness of humanity. When we receive Holy Communion, Christ gives us a share in his risen Life. The core of the mystery of Eucharist is the Son’s self-giving that is our eternal Life.
- The Eucharist is a sacrament of Christ’s self-giving. When we receive this sacrament, it is for our eternal Life—but not only for ourselves. We, like Christ, must embrace lives of self-giving. Very quickly after receiving Holy Communion, we are dismissed from Mass with words that remind us to “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord” or “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by [our] life.” This is a clear reminder that we commune with the Lord in order to live in such a way that others are brought to fullness of Life.

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: With confidence we offer our prayers to the God who gave us the gift of the only-begotten Son to be our nourishment and our Life.

Response:



Lord, hear our prayer.

Cantor:



we pray to the Lord,

That all members of the church, through communion with the risen Christ, strengthen communion with one another . . . [pause]

That all peoples live in communion with God and receive salvation . . . [pause]

That the hungry be fed abundantly from the table of humanity and the table of God’s blessings . . . [pause]

That all of us grow in our self-giving, being imitators of Christ who gave himself for us . . . [pause]

Presider: Loving God, you bless us lavishly when we receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: hear these our prayers that we might always have Life in you and your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament have left us a memorial of your Passion, grant us, we pray,

so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood

that we may always experience in ourselves

the fruits of your redemption.

Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Deut 8:2-3, 14b-16a

Moses said to the people:

“Remember how for forty years now the LORD, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert, so as to test you by affliction and find out whether or not it was your intention to keep his commandments. He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone does one live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD.

“Do not forget the LORD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery; who guided you through the vast and terrible desert with its saraph serpents and scorpions, its parched and waterless ground; who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock and fed you in the desert with manna, a food unknown to your fathers.”

CATECHESIS

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20

R⁷. (12) Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

or:

R⁷. Alleluia.

Glorify the LORD, O Jerusalem;
praise your God, O Zion.

For he has strengthened the bars of your
gates;
he has blessed your children within you.

R⁷. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

or:

R⁷. Alleluia.

He has granted peace in your borders;
with the best of wheat he fills you.
He sends forth his command to the earth;
swiftly runs his word!

R⁷. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

or:

R⁷. Alleluia.

He has proclaimed his word to Jacob,
his statutes and his ordinances to Israel.
He has not done thus for any other nation;
his ordinances he has not made known
to them. Alleluia.

R⁷. Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

or:

R⁷. Alleluia.

SECOND READING

1 Cor 10:16-17

Brothers and sisters:

The cup of blessing that we bless,
is it not a participation in the blood of
Christ?

The bread that we break,
is it not a participation in the body of
Christ?

Because the loaf of bread is one,
we, though many, are one body,
for we all partake of the one loaf.

(OPTIONAL) SEQUENCE

See Appendix A, p. 293.

About Liturgy

Altar as table: The large, rectangular altars that have traditionally been part of our church architecture (beginning already in the fourth century but standard since about the eighth century) remind us of a sarcophagus, a burial place, and sometimes they were literally that—for beneath the altar would be buried the remains of a martyr's body, or saints' relics would be embedded in the altar. Today our altars are to be square or nearly square in shape (as in the early church). This shape favors the symbolism of the action of a single priest and the community gathered around the table of the Lord. This shape also emphasizes the meal paradigm we have been so fond of using since Vatican II (see, for example, GIRM nos. 80 and 281 and the Directory for Masses with Children no. 55). This being said, the Eucharist isn't just any meal, but a paschal and messianic meal. We must be careful that we don't use meal symbolism too literally; for example, "setting the table" at the preparation of the altar and the preparation of the gifts so that this minor rite becomes a focal point.

Drinking from the cup: In most dioceses in the United States we have general permission to receive Holy Communion from the cup at all Masses, but many people still do not avail themselves of receiving both the Body and Blood as the fullness of the eucharistic sign (see GIRM no. 281). Even if few participate in drinking from the cup, it should still be offered. Catechesis on the value of drinking from the cup as the fuller sign of Jesus' self-giving and assurance that the possibility of getting sick from sharing a common cup is very remote would be helpful for many parishioners.

About Liturgical Music

Singing during Holy Communion: This solemnity provides a good opportunity to reflect on why we sing during the Communion procession. We sing during Communion because what we are doing is a communal action rather than a private one. Although we are individuals, we move in procession to the eucharistic table as one Body. Being fed together on the Body and Blood of Christ, we become more fully who we are because of baptism—the community of the church. We sing together during Communion so that the unity of our voices may express the unity of our hearts and minds (see GIRM no. 86).

The Communion song is meant to begin when the presider gives himself Communion (GIRM no. 86). This is because it is the presider who leads us in our procession to the messianic banquet. The song is then meant to continue until everyone in the assembly has received. By singing from the Communion of the presider to the Communion of the last person in line, we express that we are all one Body in Christ, called to communion with him and through him with one another.

This reflection on why we sing during Communion leads to some important questions we need to ask ourselves: What goes on during Communion? What is Christ doing? What contribution does my singing make to the work Christ is doing?

JUNE 22, 2014
THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY
BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Matt 11:25

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven
and earth;
you have revealed to little ones the
mysteries of the kingdom.

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 13:24-43; L106A

Jesus proposed another
parable to the crowds,
saying:

“The kingdom of heaven may be
likened
to a man who sowed good
seed in his field.

While everyone was asleep
his enemy came
and sowed weeds all through the
wheat, and then went off.

When the crop grew and bore fruit, the
weeds appeared as well.

The slaves of the householder came to
him and said,

‘Master, did you not sow good seed in
your field?’

Where have the weeds come from?’

He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’

His slaves said to him,

‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

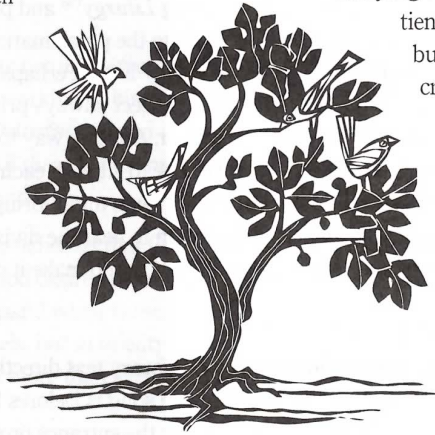
He replied, ‘No, if you pull up the weeds
you might uproot the wheat along with
them.

Let them grow together until harvest;
then at harvest time I will say to the
harvesters,

“First collect the weeds and tie them in
bundles for burning;
but gather the wheat into my barn.””

He proposed another parable to them.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a
mustard seed
that a person took and sowed in a field.
It is the smallest of all the seeds,
yet when full-grown it is the largest of
plants.



Reflecting on the Gospel

“The kingdom of heaven is like . . .” Jesus uses three comparisons to explain this mystery of God’s Presence and reign. The first parable speaks of discernment; the Master judged that to pull the weeds too soon could sacrifice the crop. Rather, he says, let “them grow together” and in the end it will be clear what to keep and what to throw out. Discernment always involves care, distinction, and judgment. The second parable speaks of full growth; with patience and care the tiny seed can grow into a full-grown, large bush that offers protection and dwelling for others of God’s creatures. Full growth always involves becoming more than we are for the good of others. The third parable speaks of transformation; just a little yeast gives life, softness, and readiness to the dough. Transformation always involves new energy toward life, rising to new possibilities, being fashioned into someone new and surprising. In this is the realization of the kingdom of heaven: our discerning God’s will, our growing into full stature as “children of the kingdom,” opening ourselves to being transformed into those remaining faithful until “the end of the age.”

The way we live—with discernment, openness to full growth, embracing transformation—reveals God’s “mastery over all things” (first reading) and that we have become “what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.” Our cultural expectation of “mastery” includes power over others, control, domination, force, manipulation. In contrast God’s “might is the source of justice” (first reading). And so God’s mastery unfolds in the strikingly different ways described in the first reading, a mastery so complete that God can afford to wait for the fruit of growth and transformation to emerge. God’s mastery is exercised by care, justice, clemency, leniency, patience. This mastery exceeds our own ways of dealing with each other. This mastery is not directed to control *over*, but rather is directed to nurturing life out of all that God loves. The kingdom of heaven is at hand when we respond to God’s mastery—God’s love—and allow God to be present to us, transforming us into more perfect images ourselves of divine Presence.

Living the Paschal Mystery

What is the good news here for our daily living? True, some of us have a tendency to live in fear of God’s judgment and to shrink from God’s mastery; we might think of ourselves only as weeds to be burned. We know that, to be sure, in our daily living there will be times when we fall short of the demands of the Gospel. But the rhythm of the paschal mystery—dying always includes rising—invites us to look beyond the immediate moment, see the possibilities for discernment and new Life, trust in God’s leniency and mercy, and be open to God’s loving-kindness. The weeds will grow. But God is patient. If we remember that the seed grows and leaven makes the dough rise, we are assured that death leads to Life. This is paschal mystery living at its best.

Another consideration, of course, is that some have such a lax conscience and attitude that God’s judgment is not something they think about or are concerned about. These folks need to recall the gospel exhortation: “Whoever has ears ought to hear.” There is always time and need for new growth! This is why it is such good news that we hear this Sunday: God is kind and merciful, and patient beyond expectation.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 297.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: The kingdom of heaven is like, Do you want us to, when full-grown, leavened, what has lain hidden, children of the kingdom, end of the age

To the point: “The kingdom of heaven is like . . .” Jesus uses three comparisons to explain this mystery of God’s Presence and reign. The first parable speaks of discernment; the second of full growth; the third of transformation. In this is the realization of the kingdom of heaven: our discerning God’s will, our growing into full stature as “children of the kingdom,” opening ourselves to being transformed into those remaining faithful until “the end of the age.” The way we live reveals God’s “mastery over all things” (first reading) and that we have become “what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.”

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: God’s presence and reign is visible in the slow but steady process of God’s “mastery over all things” (first reading). Our own discernment of God’s will for our lives, our growth in goodness, and our transformation into who God calls us to be is dependent upon God’s care, justice, leniency, kindness, forgiveness.

to our experience: Our cultural expectation of “mastery” includes power over others, control, domination, force, manipulation. In contrast God’s “might is the source of justice.” And so God’s mastery unfolds in the strikingly different ways described in the first reading.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: In these verses from Psalm 86 we beg God to listen to our pleading and give us strength. The parables told by Jesus in the gospel make clear the cause of our begging: alongside the good God has planted in the church and the world, so much bad exists; so many starts toward the coming of the kingdom are just insignificant, tiny seeds; a little yeast leavens a measure of flour, but the work of kneading must first be done if the bread is to rise. We need the grace of patience and persistence. And we need the kindness of God, this God who understands how slow growth can be (gospel) and who leaves needed room for repentance (first reading). In singing this psalm, we ask this “good and forgiving” God (psalm refrain) to give us a share in divine leniency, patience, and strength.

to psalmist preparation: What gives you confidence that God is bringing the kingdom of heaven to full growth within you? within the world? When and where do you need God’s patience, leniency, and kindness with yourself? with others?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- What and who help me discern God’s will for my life are . . .
- I experience growth in my being the visible presence of the kingdom of heaven when . . .
- I need to embrace more fully God’s “mastery” (see first reading) of my life by . . .

PRESIDERS

My leadership style embodies God’s “mastery” (see first reading) through care, justice, leniency, kindness, forgiveness toward those I serve when . . .

DEACONS

My ministry exercises justice and kindness (see first reading) for the disadvantaged whenever I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My care and concern proclaims that God is “slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity” (responsorial psalm) whenever I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

Using music ministry as the image, I would describe the kingdom of heaven as . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

I make visible the presence of the kingdom of heaven through the way I serve in that . . .

LECTORS

My proclamation reveals “what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world” when I . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Some of the ways I nurture communicants so that the kingdom of heaven becomes visible for them is . . .

CELEBRATION

Model Penitential Act

Presider: God's Presence and reign is visible in our lives when we open ourselves to God's will for us. Let us pray that we might discern God's will for us more faithfully . . . [pause]

Lord Jesus, you are the Son of Man who calls us to grow in goodness: Lord . . .

Christ Jesus, you are the fulfillment of God's kingdom come: Christ . . .

Lord Jesus, you are the leaven that transforms the world: Lord . . .

Homily Points

• A whole series of movies and toys called "transformers" has been popular for a number of years. Children love them. But they are a passing phase and soon the children grow tired of them and outgrow them. By contrast, the kind of transformation required of us to grow into full stature as "children of the kingdom" cannot be passing, but must be lifelong.

• The kingdom of heaven comes about through our recurring cycles of transformation. These transformations happen in unperceivable ways over indeterminate periods of time. Although the outcome requires work on our part—discernment of God's will, openness to growing in goodness, embracing continual transformation—we do not on our own produce the fruit ready to be harvested. This outcome is under God's "mastery," not ours. Thank God!

• Discernment of God's will for us, growing in holiness, and being transformed into who God calls us to be is neither easy nor quick. The amazing promise of the parables in this gospel is that God with patient understanding chooses us to be visible icons of the divine Presence and reign, of the kingdom of heaven. The ongoing challenge is that we choose the continual transformation required for us to live according to God's will, God's mastery, God's revelation through us of "what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world."

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: The God who has mastery over all things has power to answer our prayers.

With confidence we lift our voices.

Response:



Cantor:



That all members of the church may be visible icons of the presence of the kingdom of heaven by the way they live . . . [pause]

That world leaders govern always with justice and kindness, with care and leniency . . . [pause]

That those who are sick and suffering be comforted by the care and compassion of this community of believers . . . [pause]

That all of us gathered be open to God's continual transformation of our lives reflecting divine kindness and forgiveness . . . [pause]

Presider: Merciful God, you judge with justice and leniency: hear these our prayers that we might be strengthened in our faithful discipleship and one day enjoy the fullness of Life with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

Show favor, O Lord, to your servants and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace,

that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity,

they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Wis 12:13, 16-19

There is no god besides you who have the care of all, that you need show you have not unjustly condemned.

For your might is the source of justice; your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all.

For you show your might when the perfection of your power is disbelieved; and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity.

But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us; for power, whenever you will, attends you.

And you taught your people, by these deeds,

that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope

that you would permit repentance for their sins.

CATECHESIS

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

R. (5a) Lord, you are good and forgiving.

You, O LORD, are good and forgiving,
abounding in kindness to all who call
upon you.

Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer
and attend to the sound of my pleading.

R. Lord, you are good and forgiving.

All the nations you have made shall come
and worship you, O LORD,
and glorify your name.

For you are great, and you do wondrous
deeds;
you alone are God.

R. Lord, you are good and forgiving.

You, O LORD, are a God merciful and
gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in kindness
and fidelity.

Turn toward me, and have pity on me;
give your strength to your servant.

R. Lord, you are good and forgiving.

SECOND READING

Rom 8:26-27

Brothers and sisters:

The Spirit comes to the aid of our
weakness;

for we do not know how to pray as we
ought,

but the Spirit himself intercedes with
inexpressible groanings.

And the one who searches hearts

knows what is the intention of the
Spirit,

because he intercedes for the holy ones
according to God's will.

About Liturgy

Mastery over liturgy, part 1: Because liturgy makes present the paschal mystery and is the celebration of the whole church, no local parish or liturgical community has complete freedom in what they do with liturgy. The "mastery" over liturgy actually unfolds in different ways and at different levels.

First, each liturgy or rite has an *editio typica*, that is, an official text that is promulgated (usually in Latin) by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments in Rome, which, in turn, is translated (into English by ICEL, that is, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy) and approved. Then each conference of bishops (usually a country) makes appropriate pastoral adaptations for a particular country that must also be approved by Rome. With both the *editio typica* and because of the pastoral adaptations of a conference, some legitimate options and variations are part of every rite.

Second, texts and norms must be interpreted. This is not so easy as it might seem. For example, the US bishops have determined that a profound bow is a sign of respect we make before receiving Communion. Two interpretation questions arise: What does a "profound" bow look like and when is it made? Because of the need for interpretation, variations in how this directive is implemented in the various dioceses occur.

(Continued in the Catechesis about Liturgy for the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.)

About Liturgical Music

Music suggestions: The verses of Delores Dufner's "The Reign of God" (G3, HG, SS, W4) poetically recap various images Jesus used to describe the kingdom of heaven. The verses given in SS follow the imagery in this Sunday's gospel and would work well as the entrance song. The extended version of this hymn used in G3, HG, and W4 would work well during the preparation of the gifts. "The Kingdom of God" (G3, W4, WC) offers another challenging text and strong tune about the kingdom and would suit the entrance procession or the recessional. "Come, You Thankful People, Come" (found in most resources) is generally reserved for harvest season and Thanksgiving time. Yet verse 2 refers to "wheat and tares together sown" and verse 3 promises that God will put angels in charge of the harvest to cast the tares into the fire and to gather the fruitful ears into God's everlasting garner. This hymn would be suitable during the preparation of the gifts.

JULY 20, 2014
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Matt 4:23

R¹. Alleluia, alleluia.

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom and cured every disease among the people.

R². Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matt 15:21-28; L118A

At that time, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out,

“Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David!

My daughter is tormented by a demon.”

But Jesus did not say a word in answer to her.

Jesus’ disciples came and asked him, “Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us.”

He said in reply,

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

But the woman came and did Jesus homage, saying, “Lord, help me.”

He said in reply,

“It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.”

She said, “Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.”

Then Jesus said to her in reply,

“O woman, great is your faith!

Let it be done for you as you wish.”

And the woman’s daughter was healed from that hour.

Reflecting on the Gospel

In this gospel Jesus is acting within the religious tradition of the time: God’s favor was for the people of God, for the “house of Israel.” He is quite harsh in his words to the Canaanite woman. Any one of us would recoil at such a snub. In face of such conduct, what fed the woman’s persistence in her request?

Notice the wording of the woman’s request to Jesus: “Have pity on *me*, Lord, Son of David!” Since she is asking for healing for her daughter, one would expect the request to be worded as a desire for Jesus to have pity on the daughter.

The woman is truly revealing her own pain in begging for Jesus’ pity. What loving parent would not empathize with a child as does this gospel woman? What parent does not suffer when the child suffers?

The gospel woman is clearly someone who is not self-centered, but is centered on another (her daughter). Her love trumps harshness; her hope overcomes rebuff.

The Canaanite woman in the gospel refuses to be rebuffed even by the exclusionary and harsh words of Jesus. Nothing gets in the way of her seeking healing for her daughter “tormented by a demon.” The woman “keeps calling out” to Jesus because she wants him to remove the demon—to remove the evil that separates. Her great faith moves Jesus to grant her request.

Faith, by nature, is persistent. Persistence, by nature, is single-minded. Single-mindedness, by nature, achieves the end it seeks. Like the woman in the gospel seeking healing for her daughter, our faith must be great enough to overcome barriers, must focus persistently on Jesus, and must bear the fruit of salvation and healing for others. Our faith must be strengthened by hope and spurred to action by great love.

The woman approaches Jesus, but is not initially welcomed.

Still she persists in her request because she never loses sight of the end she seeks: healing the separation her daughter possessed by a demon experiences, healing the separation she experiences from Jesus. She is absolutely single-minded about achieving her end. In this the woman in the gospel demonstrates something significant about faith: sheer persistence matters. Although rebuffed by disciples and ignored by Jesus, she persists with surprising results. Her dogged persistence is recognized by Jesus for what it truly is—great faith (the only person in Matthew’s gospel who is praised for great faith)—and Jesus does have pity on her. Rather than being sent away without her request fulfilled, the woman’s persistent faith moves Jesus to grant her request: “the woman’s daughter was healed.” Yes, deep faith can move the mountain of religious tradition and achieve the end it seeks.

Living the Paschal Mystery

There is a fine line between “persistence” and “nagging.” The latter is about getting what we want, being turned toward ourselves. The persistence in the gospel that models great faith arises from being turned toward the good of others. Persistence in seeking the good of others is possible only when we have established healthy relationships. Our prayer and spiritual disciplines are related to our good works, for they are all concrete ways we establish solid relationships with God and each other. Both prayer and good works require persistence, for that is how we form ourselves in the good habits of being turned toward God and others.



Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: tormented by a demon, Jesus did not say a word, keeps calling out, great is your faith, daughter was healed

To the point: The Canaanite woman in the gospel refuses to be rebuffed even by the exclusionary and harsh words of Jesus. Nothing gets in the way of her seeking healing for her daughter “tormented by a demon.” The woman “keeps calling out” to Jesus because she wants him to remove the demon—to remove the evil that separates. Her great faith moves Jesus to grant her request. Faith, by nature, is persistent. Persistence, by nature, is single-minded. Single-mindedness, by nature, achieves the end it seeks. Like the woman in the gospel seeking healing for her daughter, our faith must be great enough to overcome barriers, must focus persistently on Jesus, and must bear the fruit of salvation and healing for others.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: What was for Isaiah a vision and future possibility—namely, all peoples will be drawn together in worship of God—is realized in the ministry of Jesus as a foreign woman comes with great faith to seek healing and offer him homage.

to our experience: All of us struggle with persistence—in prayer, in good works, with any spiritual discipline. The gospel woman reminds us that sometimes the sheer persistence can be the prayer, the good work, the spiritual discipline.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Psalm 67 was a song of thanksgiving for the harvest that expressed the ever-widening reach of God’s blessings: first upon the people of Israel, then upon all nations, and finally to the ends of the earth. Even during the period of the Old Testament, the Israelites were beginning to see that their election as God’s chosen people was not meant to be exclusive but to be a means of salvation for all peoples.

The first reading also proclaims that God’s blessings and salvation are for all peoples. In the gospel Jesus makes this revelation concrete when he responds to the Canaanite woman’s persistent plea and heals her daughter. In the responsorial psalm we pray that all peoples be brought into the circle of God’s embrace. We expand our hearts to the reach of God’s salvation. We move from the disciples wanting to dismiss a needy person who is bothering them to Jesus acclaiming her faith and answering her need. We join Jesus in fulfilling God’s plan that all peoples come to salvation.

to psalmist preparation: As you prepare to sing this responsorial psalm, you might spend time reflecting on your own understanding of the reach of God’s salvation. Whom do you find it hard to see within God’s saving embrace? Whose cries of need seem more a bother to you than an opportunity to show God’s saving care (gospel)? How, on the other hand, have you grown in your understanding and in your ability to respond? How has your heart been widened?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- What helps me persist in focusing on Jesus, like the Canaanite woman did, is . . .
- I am most single-minded about . . . I need to become more single-minded about . . .
- My “great faith” bears the fruit of . . .

PRESIDERS

An “outsider” (like the Canaanite woman) who has brought me to a deeper understanding of faith is . . .

DEACONS

I assist the vulnerable and marginalized to persist in faith by . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

Some ways I motivate the diverse members of my liturgical community to gather as “a house of prayer for all peoples” (first reading) are . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

I find it difficult to persist in music ministry when . . . What deepens my faith and helps me focus single-mindedly on Jesus is . . . When focused on Jesus, my music ministry becomes . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

Times when I am tempted *not* to serve the needs of another, like the disciples with the Canaanite woman, are . . . What changes me into a servant for them is . . .

LECTORS

Single-mindedly living God’s word makes my proclamation . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

When my faith brings me to focus more persistently on Jesus, my ministry leads me to . . .

Model Penitential Act

Presider: The Canaanite woman in today's gospel persists in begging Jesus to heal her daughter. We make her prayer our own as we, too, ask Jesus to have mercy on us . . . [pause]

Lord Jesus, you are God's healing Presence among us: Lord . . .

Christ Jesus, you are the power that dispels evil: Christ . . .

Lord Jesus, you are the Savior of all peoples: Lord . . .

Homily Points

- Single-minded persistence is oriented toward a specific end. When the end is significant and we want it with all our heart, the end feeds the persistence. For example, parents with a desperately ill child exhaust all their personal and financial resources seeking a cure with all their hearts. The end the Canaanite woman wanted was for Jesus to heal her daughter of the demon. This end was strong enough for her to follow her heart in spite of the disciples' attempt to dismiss her and Jesus' harsh retort.
- The Canaanite woman not only demonstrates great faith but also persistent hope and unflagging love. Her faith rests in her belief that Jesus has the power to heal; her persistent hope rests in Jesus' power over evil; her unflagging love is for her daughter for whom she will pay any price to achieve healing. Jesus is moved to exercise his power over evil and bring health to the daughter because of the mother's great faith.
- What demon torments us? It may be consumerism enticing us to focus on things rather than people; false expectations and hopes that take us in a direction away from Gospel values; self-centeredness that separates us from those who care for us. What heals our demon? Focusing on Jesus, asking God for what we need, persisting in prayer, reaching out to others, paying attention to what others are saying, deepening our faith by saying yes to whatever God asks of us. With all our hearts we must seek deeper faith, more potent hope, and more expansive love. This is the end that must feed all we do.

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: Let us pray for our needs with persistence and great faith.

Response: 
 Lord, hear our prayer.

Cantor: 
 we pray to the Lord,

That the leaders of the church may be a source of encouragement to all who search for greater faith . . . [pause]

That all peoples persistently seek salvation . . . [pause]

That all who are sick in mind, body, or spirit be healed . . . [pause]

That all of us gathered here focus our hearts and expectations on Jesus, the source of all healing and Life . . . [pause]

Presider: Almighty and ever-living God, you desire that all people be saved: hear these our prayers that our faith may be increased and we may one day live with you forever. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

O God, who have prepared for those who love you good things which no eye can see, fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love, so that, loving you in all things and above all things, we may attain your promises, which surpass every human desire. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Isa 56:1, 6-7

Thus says the LORD:
Observe what is right, do what is just;
for my salvation is about to come,
my justice, about to be revealed.

The foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
ministering to him,
loving the name of the LORD,
and becoming his servants—
all who keep the sabbath free from profanation
and hold to my covenant,
them I will bring to my holy mountain
and make joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and sacrifices
will be acceptable on my altar,
for my house shall be called
a house of prayer for all peoples.

CATECHESIS

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

R. (4) O God, let all the nations praise you!

May God have pity on us and bless us;
may he let his face shine upon us.
So may your way be known upon earth;
among all nations, your salvation.

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

May the nations be glad and exult
because you rule the peoples in equity;
the nations on the earth you guide.

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

May the peoples praise you, O God;
may all the peoples praise you!
May God bless us,
and may all the ends of the earth fear
him!

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

SECOND READING

Rom 11:13-15, 29-32

Brothers and sisters:

I am speaking to you Gentiles.

Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the
Gentiles,

I glory in my ministry in order to make
my race jealous
and thus save some of them.

For if their rejection is the reconciliation
of the world,
what will their acceptance be but life
from the dead?

For the gifts and the call of God are
irrevocable.

Just as you once disobeyed God
but have now received mercy because
of their disobedience,
so they have now disobeyed in order
that,

by virtue of the mercy shown to you,
they too may now receive mercy.

For God delivered all to disobedience,
that he might have mercy upon all.

About Liturgy

Structure of the classical collect: The collect for this Sunday is a magnificent composition from which we can learn much about the structure and content of a classical collect. The invitation to pray ("Let us pray") is followed by a period of silence in which the members of the assembly each formulate their own intentions and pray for them. Thus, within the very structure of liturgical prayer can be room for robust, persistent, humble personal prayer. Here is one instance where the liturgy gives us an opportunity to make the prayer uniquely our own in a very personal way.

Notice that a period of silence follows the invitation to pray. This is one of the required silences in the eucharistic liturgy (see GIRM nos. 45, 54, and 127). It is one of the times in the liturgy when the assembly is invited to make very personal their communal prayer. When the silence is truncated or not respected at all, the assembly is denied this opportune time to make their own the eucharistic liturgy. If the parish is not in the habit of observing this silence, catechesis would be necessary before the presider(s) pauses after the "Let us pray" for a period of silence. Begin the catechesis immediately; this silence is an important ritual element!

Then comes the collect (the prayer given in the Roman Missal), the form of which includes an *address to God* (the simple "O God"), the declaration of an *attribute of God* ("who have prepared for those who love you good things which no eye can see"), *petition* ("fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love, so that, loving you in all things and above all things, we may attain your promises, which surpass every human desire"), and, finally, the statement of *mediation* through Christ that characterizes all Christian liturgical prayer.

About Liturgical Music

Music suggestions: Widely available hymns that express the inclusivity of salvation proclaimed in this Sunday's Liturgy of the Word include "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" (suitable for the entrance or the preparation of the gifts), "Gather Us In" (appropriate for the entrance song), and "In Christ There Is No East or West" (a good choice for the recessional song). Also suited to this Sunday is "Help Us Accept Each Other" (W4), which could be used for the preparation of the gifts or the recessional song.

Sylvia Dunstan's "All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly" (G3, SS, W4) would be an excellent choice for the Communion procession. All who, like the Canaanite woman, hunger because of deep need are "never strangers" but "welcome guest[s]" at the table of God's goodness. The HOLY MANNA setting of this hymn is through-composed and may be difficult for the assembly to sing while processing. Bob Moore's setting of the same text, "All Who Hunger" (G3, W4) makes the last two phrases a refrain that can be sung easily without book in hand.

AUGUST 17, 2014
TWENTIETH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION
cf. Acts 16:14b

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Open our hearts, O Lord,
to listen to the words of your Son.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 20:1-16a; L133A

Jesus told his disciples this parable:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard.

After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o'clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.’

So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise.

Going out about five o'clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’

They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’

He said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard.’

When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.’

When those who had started about five o'clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 299.



Reflecting on the Gospel

We generally like to be first. For example, we want to be at the head of the line forming to buy the latest electronic wonder or software release that promises us all our computer problems will be solved. Children want to be the first served at Thanksgiving dinner so they can get one of the two drumsticks; we want to be first on the short list of candidates for a good job. Who doesn't want to be first? Being first implies getting more, being privileged, getting ahead of others. In this Sunday's gospel, however, Jesus reverses our expectation about the prerogatives of being first. He says the first will be last, and the last will be first. This, surely, is a different way of looking at first and last! This, surely, imposes a different perspective—a perspective appropriate and necessary for the kingdom of heaven to come.

This gospel raises the question of who is first and who is last in the kingdom of heaven. Those laborers are last who shift their focus from doing the work of the landowner to grumbling about the amount of wages others are receiving. Those are first who do not labor in the vineyard because of the amount of wages, but simply because they are privileged to share in the work of the landowner. Indeed, simply being called to the privilege of sharing in Jesus' work of salvation is its own recompense.

Choosing this work of furthering Jesus' saving ministry means that we shift our focus from wages to the One for whom we labor. When we seek God, then God's generosity meets our capacity to receive the Life and salvation God offers. This parable is ultimately about God's generosity in granting salvation, something we can never deserve but are given because of God's holiness and God's ways above our ways (see first reading). Salvation cannot be measured; it is a most generous gift of our holy God.

The kingdom of heaven is present when we keep our focus on what we are asked to do, not on what we expect to get. Simply being privileged to share in Jesus' work of salvation is already an abundant wage. The wages will take care of themselves because in this kingdom generosity overflows. To share in this superabundant generosity, we need to be willing to do the hard work of patterning our lives on Jesus' life, of giving ourselves over for the good of others, of keeping focused on the divine Landowner who calls us to labor for the sake of the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is revealed by those who choose this work. Do we choose it? Which kind of laborer do we want to be—the first or the last?

Living the Paschal Mystery

It is no easy task to be laborers in God's vineyard. Emptying ourselves of our own wishes and desires, our own focus on wages and reward, our own way of doing things costs us a great deal. To be faithful laborers in God's vineyard we must immerse ourselves in God's thoughts and ways. This means, for example, that we must spend some time pondering and praying God's revealed word in Scripture. We must learn from the gospels how to put others first when they are in need, how to forgive with no strings attached, how to take time to look at ourselves and how our expectations might be off base. We must put aside thinking of wages and rewards and instead focus on the divine task to which God calls us: to be laborers in the saving work of the Son. Choosing to be faithful to God, learning to be open to God's Presence, opening ourselves to God's strength and help, we are faithful laborers who make present God's kingdom by the very way we live as Jesus did.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: kingdom of heaven, landowner, hire laborers, usual wage, grumbled, last, first

To the point: This gospel raises the question of who is first and who is last in the kingdom of heaven. Those laborers are last who shift their focus from doing the work of the landowner to grumbling about the amount of wages others are receiving. Those are first who do not labor in the vineyard because of the amount of wages, but simply because they are privileged to share in the work of the landowner. Indeed, simply being called to the privilege of sharing in Jesus' work of salvation is its own recompense. The kingdom of heaven is revealed by those who choose this work. Do we choose it?

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: While Isaiah is telling one truth, namely, that God's thoughts and ways are not ours, Jesus is telling another truth, that we are called to participate in God's thoughts and ways by working for the coming of the kingdom.

to our experience: Being completely lost in something we enjoy doing very much is its own reward. How much more so when we stay focused on following Jesus faithfully!

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Like a parent sitting at a child's bedside, ready to respond to the slightest cry, God is ever near, answering our every need (psalm refrain). Once we recognize that God is giving us all that we need, we no longer find ourselves grumbling about what God is giving to others (gospel). Instead we rejoice that everyone's needs are being met and bless the One who is "just in all his ways" (psalm). We turn away from rivalries with one another to celebrate the limitless expanse of God's care and generosity. Then the "ways" and "thoughts" of God that are far above us (first reading) can find a place very near, in our own hearts. May this be what we call upon God to give us (refrain).

to psalmist preparation: "The Lord is near to all . . . who call upon him in truth" (psalm). What truth about God is this psalm and these readings inviting you to ponder? What truth about yourself? How during this week might you call upon God to show you this truth more clearly?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- The labor in the vineyard that Jesus has invited me to do . . .
- When I labor faithfully in Jesus' vineyard, the generosity of God that I already experience is . . .
- I find it easiest to choose to do Jesus' work of salvation when . . . I find it the most difficult when . . .

PRESIDERS

I am the landowner calling laborers for God's vineyard when I . . . I am a laborer in God's vineyard when I . . .

DEACONS

I encourage the "last" to benefit from God's generosity and become "first" by . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

The manner of my greeting is like God calling laborers into the divine vineyard when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

I am a laborer in God's vineyard, and my song while working sounds like . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

I experience recompense for my attentiveness while serving in these ways . . .

LECTORS

My preparing for proclaiming God's word enables me to enter into God's thoughts and ways (see first reading) when I . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Communicants are laborers sharing in Jesus' work of salvation, and Holy Communion helps them choose to be faithful to this work in that . . .

Model Penitential Act

Presider: God calls us to labor in the divine vineyard. As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us pause and ask God for the grace to be faithful laborers . . . [pause]

Lord Jesus, you came that we might have salvation: Lord . . .

Christ Jesus, you are the way to everlasting Life: Christ . . .

Lord Jesus, you are the One who calls us to share in your work of salvation: Lord . . .

Homily Points

- Individuals passionate about a specific work—for example, scientific exploration of Mars or medical research into a cure for cancer—find fulfillment and satisfaction in pursuing the work even when the desired outcome is still far off. The work itself for now is its own recompense. For followers of Jesus, sharing in Jesus' work of salvation is, likewise, its own recompense.

- What a privilege it is to share in Jesus' work of salvation! No matter at what hour we are called to labor for Jesus, we are nonetheless to be faithful. Faithful to the labor, we already receive the recompense of closer relationship with Jesus and each other, we reveal the kingdom of heaven, and we are counted among those who are first in the kingdom of heaven.

- Being faithful laborers in Jesus' work of salvation is a matter of doing as Jesus did: responding to the everyday needs of people who cross our paths. For example, helping those blind to their own goodness see how they affect other people in many ways, lightening the burden of others by lending a helping hand, pointing out a narrowness in another's vision and helping him or her come to the vision of Jesus. Many opportunities present themselves each day for us to do Jesus' work of salvation and receive the recompense that comes with being faithful. Do we choose these opportunities? Are we passionate about this work?

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: God is the landowner who calls us to work in the vineyard of the kingdom of heaven. Let us pray that we might be faithful.

Response:



Cantor:



That all members of the church heed God's call to share in Jesus' work of salvation by giving of themselves for the good of others . . . [pause]

That people of all nations care for others and receive the salvation God offers . . . [pause]

That those in any need receive from the laborers in God's vineyard what they need to come to wholeness of life . . . [pause]

That each of us gathered here use the gifts God has given us to work faithfully to reveal the kingdom of heaven . . . [pause]

Presider: Saving God, you call us to be laborers in your vineyard: keep us faithful to this call, make us generous in our response, and lead us one day to the fullness of your kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

O God, who founded all the commands of your sacred Law upon love of you and of our neighbor, grant that, by keeping your precepts, we may merit to attain eternal life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Isa 55:6-9

Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call him while he is near.

Let the scoundrel forsake his way,
and the wicked his thoughts;
let him turn to the LORD for mercy;
to our God, who is generous in
forgiving.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the
LORD.

As high as the heavens are above the
earth,
so high are my ways above your ways
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

CATECHESIS

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18

R. (18a) The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

Every day will I bless you,
and I will praise your name forever and ever.

Great is the LORD and highly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
The LORD is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

The LORD is just in all his ways
and holy in all his works.
The LORD is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

SECOND READING

Phil 1:20c-24, 27a

Brothers and sisters:
Christ will be magnified in my body,
whether by life or by death.
For to me life is Christ, and death is gain.
If I go on living in the flesh,
that means fruitful labor for me.
And I do not know which I shall choose.
I am caught between the two.
I long to depart this life and be with
Christ,
for that is far better.
Yet that I remain in the flesh
is more necessary for your benefit.
Only, conduct yourselves in a way worthy
of the gospel of Christ.

About Liturgy

Communal experiences of generosity: The Catholic Church is one of the largest philanthropic organizations in the world; this attests to people's generosity. It is appropriate and helpful also to model this generosity at the parish level. It is always good to encourage gifts for the poor (they don't have to be only nonperishable food) as a way of encouraging people to be generous with others as God has been generous with them. These gifts may be presented at the presentation of gifts along with the bread and wine (see GIRM no. 73). It is also good to organize some donation of labor on a parish level—Habitat for Humanity might be a good thing for some parishes; other parishes already sponsor soup kitchens; year-round collection of gift items to be given to families in need at Thanksgiving and Christmas might also give a communal witness to generosity. In all of these generous labors, we are reminded to keep our focus on God who calls us through these generous acts to make visible the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

Communal experiences of generosity are wonderful ways to build community in the parish, itself a visible sign of the Presence of God's kingdom. It is beneficial to help the people understand that such generosity of self, time, and of what one has is an extension of the dismissal that concludes the eucharistic ritual itself; one choice is to "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." In the early church (and in some parishes today) food gifts were regularly brought up with the eucharistic gifts of bread and wine. As the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, these food gifts are a reminder that our generosity changes us into being more perfect images of God. Moreover, this daily bread for those in need comes from God's table and is in a real sense a witness of how God works through us (how we are instruments of God) in furthering Jesus' saving work. In this way God's ways really do become our ways!

About Liturgical Music

Music suggestions: An excellent hymn for this Sunday is "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" (found in most resources). The text speaks of "plentiful redemption" and "joy for all" because "the love of God is broader than the measures of our mind." This well-known hymn would be a good choice either for the entrance procession or during the preparation of the gifts. The text of James Chepponis's "Called to Labor in God's Vineyard" (W4) is based on this Sunday's gospel. In it we call one another to "labor in God's vineyard, eager to accept the task," willing to "give ourselves completely to the work that is at hand." We also ask God to "Send more workers called by you." This hymn would make an appropriate recessional song. "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending" (WC, W4) speaks of God's boundless generosity and our call to labor as servants using our talents and treasures "to spread the gospel word." "For the Fruits of This [All] Creation" (found in most resources) thanks God for the blessings of a bountiful harvest but also states that "In the just reward of labor, God's will is done. In the help we give our neighbor, God's will is done." Both of these hymns would work well for either the preparation of the gifts or the recessional.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2014
TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Phil 2:15d, 16a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Shine like lights in the world
as you hold on to the word of life.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matt 22:15-21; L145A

The Pharisees went off
and plotted how they
might entrap
Jesus in speech.

They sent their
disciples to him,
with the Herodians,
saying,

“Teacher, we know
that you are a
truthful man
and that you teach
the way of God in
accordance with the truth.

And you are not concerned with
anyone’s opinion,
for you do not regard a person’s
status.

Tell us, then, what is your opinion:
Is it lawful to pay the census tax to
Caesar or not?”

Knowing their malice, Jesus said,
“Why are you testing me, you
hypocrites?

Show me the coin that pays the census
tax.”

Then they handed him the Roman coin.
He said to them, “Whose image is this
and whose inscription?”

They replied, “Caesar’s.”

At that he said to them,

“Then repay to Caesar what belongs
to Caesar
and to God what belongs to God.”



Reflecting on the Gospel

Who among us does not like a little flattery every now and then? We know the praise is not quite sincere, but we still like to hear it. We might respond with a tongue-in-cheek remark that lets the flatterer know we see through the ruse but are enjoying the encounter. While flattery usually is prompted by self-interest, most often there is no ill intention involved nor serious ill effects. Perhaps someone flatters us about our skills so we help with a time-consuming project. We laugh, help out, get some good exercise, have some pleasant companionship.

The flattery produces no harm, no foul. The beginning of this Sunday’s gospel drips with flattery. It is laid on thick—but with malicious intent: the Pharisees and Herodians want to entrap Jesus.

Jesus is not fooled by the Pharisees and Herodians’ shameful flattery, but sees through it to their malice and hypocrisy. These vices lead to a false dichotomy between earthly and divine kingdoms. Goodness and truth lead us to recognize our place and proper conduct in both kingdoms. When earthly kingdoms are guided by God’s values and ways, they are no less than the spatial presence here and now of God’s kingdom. And we pay only one tax: the self-giving that bears the image of Jesus.

These Jewish authorities miscalculate Jesus’ clear perception of himself and his mission. Jesus’ answer puts things into perspective. When God is truly the center of our lives, and we faithfully bear the image of Jesus in all

we do, then there need be no separation between earthly and heavenly realms. True, sometimes the values of religion and society clash. When this happens, we need only to remember the basic notion of religion: a “binding” (the word “religion” comes from the Latin meaning to bind) of ourselves to God and each other. When God and God’s ways are sovereign in our lives, our choices about responsibilities and concerns in all the various realms in which we live—family, workplace, city, nation, world, church—are more clear. Even when there is a clash of values, if we remain faithful to the image of Jesus we bear, then it is clear to others how we make our choices; how we serve; and how we tithe our time, talents, and treasure for the good of all. The fundamental choice is ours to make: to bear the image of Jesus at all times and in all places.

Living the Paschal Mystery

“Dualism” claims God is in one realm (heaven) and everything else is in another (this world) and that these realms are mutually exclusive. Jesus challenges this dualism, however, and asserts that a right perspective means that we understand God as sovereign over all people and things and that other realms have a justifiable claim on us only to the extent that we need not compromise the image of Jesus we bear. Christian living is being comfortable in all realms, all having their just claim on us, without compromising God’s sovereignty.

Moreover, living in “this world” and our response to it is connected to our religious stance that God is sovereign. Doing good for others not only improves our own world, but strengthens right relationships with each other, thus building up the Body of Christ and establishing God’s kingdom in this world. Like Jesus, we give to God our very selves, but we do so through our goodness to others.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: entrap Jesus, malice, hypocrites, Whose image, belongs to Caesar, belongs to God

To the point: Jesus is not fooled by the Pharisees and Herodians' shameful flattery, but sees through it to their malice and hypocrisy. These vices lead to a false dichotomy between earthly and divine kingdoms. Goodness and truth lead us to recognize our place and proper conduct in both kingdoms. When earthly kingdoms are guided by God's values and ways, they are no less than the spatial presence here and now of God's kingdom. And we pay only one tax: the self-giving that bears the image of Jesus.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: God uses earthly realms, as in the case of Cyrus the Persian who liberates the Jews from Babylonian captivity, to further the presence of God's kingdom. There need be no opposition between them. And when there is, it's due to human malice and hypocrisy.

to our experience: Sometimes what we owe to God can put us in conflict with the civil authority, for example, conscientious objection to war, policy decisions concerning poverty and environment, etc. When conflicts arise, is it Caesar or is it God we serve?

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: The connection between the verses of Psalm 96 and this Sunday's first reading and gospel is readily evident. God alone is God; even when unrecognized, God alone is the source of all power and authority (first reading). The psalm calls us to give God "glory and praise" and to announce God's sovereignty to all nations. Jesus repeats this command in his admonition to the Pharisees: give God proper due (gospel).

But a subtle irony in the readings lends even greater weight to this command of Jesus. While Cyrus, a non-Jew, unknowingly unfolds God's plan, the Pharisees (acknowledged religious leaders among the Jews) knowingly work to subvert it. One who does not know God furthers God's redemptive plan, while those reputed to be God's servants thwart it. The message for us is that to give God proper due it is not sufficient merely to mouth praise or to engage in public religious activity. Rather, we must give what Cyrus is unaware of and the Pharisees refuse: our hearts in conscious cooperation with God's will.

to psalmist preparation: The greatest "glory and honor" we can give God is an obedient heart. This is what you call the assembly to in singing Psalm 96. Is there anything that stands in the way of your own making of this self-gift?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- What "belongs to God" in my life . . .
- The goodness and truth I must more fully embrace in order to serve rightly both the kingdom of God and civil authority is . . .
- When people look upon me and my life, the "image" and "inscription" they see is . . .

PRESIDERS

My ministry guides people in the values and ways of God so that the kingdom of heaven is more apparent in their lives when I . . .

DEACONS

I help those who are marginalized appreciate their dignity (that they bear the image and inscription of Christ) by . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

When I remember that each member of the assembly bears the image of Christ, my hospitality is like . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

My music making helps reveal how I am the image of Christ when I . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

When I serve graciously and willingly, my serving makes visible the presence of the kingdom of heaven in that . . .

LECTORS

What I need to surrender to God in order to proclaim the Scriptures in goodness and truth is . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

My manner of distributing Holy Communion reveals the presence of the kingdom of heaven here and now when I . . .

Model Penitential Act

Presider: In today's gospel Jesus dispels the false dichotomy between earthly kingdoms and God's kingdom. As we prepare to celebrate this liturgy, let us reflect on how well we have been guided by God's values and ways . . . [pause]

Lord Jesus, you teach us the values and ways of God: Lord . . .

Christ Jesus, you are the fullness of Life in the kingdom of heaven: Christ . . .

Lord Jesus, you are the image of the unseen God: Lord . . .

Homily Points

- Rudyard Kipling, in both the opening and closing stanzas of "The Ballad of East and West," wrote the oft-quoted line that "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Rarely, if ever, however, do people quote what he wrote in subsequent lines: "But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, When two strong men stand face to face . . ." where he implies the separation need not exist. When people look more clearly, many (if not most) dichotomies dissolve. In this gospel Jesus dissolves a dichotomy between what belongs to Caesar and to God.
- Three images appear in this gospel: on the face of the Roman coin, the image of Caesar; on the face of Jesus, the image of "a truthful man" committed to God and uninfluenced by flattery; on the faces of the Pharisees and Herodians, the image of malice and hypocrisy. With goodness and truth, Jesus shows that one can act with integrity in both earthly and divine kingdoms.
- What image do people see when they look upon our face? When we are guided by God's values and ways, our face bears the image of Jesus and we make visible the kingdom of heaven. We need only to pay one tax in both earthly and heavenly realms: the self-giving that bears the image of Jesus.

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: Our God guides us in right ways and helps us live with goodness and truth. Let us pray that we be faithful to this God.

Response:



Cantor:



That all members of the church fulfill responsibly both civic and religious obligations . . . [pause]

That all leaders of nations may lead those they govern in the values and ways of God . . . [pause]

That all those struggling to find their place in life be strengthened to be faithful to what God asks of them . . . [pause]

That all of us here present grow in showing forth the image of Jesus borne upon our face . . . [pause]

Presider: Almighty God, you are sovereign over all realms: as we strive to be images of your divine Son, may your kingdom be more firmly established among us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

Almighty ever-living God,
grant that we may always conform our
will to yours
and serve your majesty in sincerity of
heart.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Isa 45:1, 4-6

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, Cyrus,
whose right hand I grasp,
subduing nations before him,
and making kings run in his service,
opening doors before him
and leaving the gates unbarred:
For the sake of Jacob, my servant,
of Israel, my chosen one,
I have called you by your name,
giving you a title, though you knew me
not.
I am the LORD and there is no other,
there is no God besides me.
It is I who arm you, though you know me
not,
so that toward the rising and the setting
of the sun
people may know that there is none
besides me.
I am the LORD, there is no other.

CATECHESIS

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10

R. (7b) Give the Lord glory and honor.

Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all you lands.
Tell his glory among the nations;
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

R. Give the Lord glory and honor.

For great is the LORD and highly to be
praised;
awesome is he, beyond all gods.
For all the gods of the nations are things
of nought,
but the LORD made the heavens.

R. Give the Lord glory and honor.

Give to the LORD, you families of nations,
give to the LORD glory and praise;
give to the LORD the glory due his name!
Bring gifts, and enter his courts.

R. Give the Lord glory and honor.

Worship the LORD, in holy attire;
tremble before him, all the earth;
say among the nations: The LORD is king,
he governs the peoples with equity.

R. Give the Lord glory and honor.

SECOND READING

1 Thess 1:1-5b

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church
of the Thessalonians
in God the Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ:
grace to you and peace.

We give thanks to God always for all of
you,
remembering you in our prayers,
unceasingly calling to mind your work
of faith and labor of love
and endurance in hope of our Lord
Jesus Christ,
before our God and Father,
knowing, brothers and sisters loved by
God,
how you were chosen.

For our gospel did not come to you in
word alone,
but also in power and in the Holy Spirit
and with much conviction.

About Liturgy

Eschatological expectation: Of all the synoptic gospels, the structure of Matthew's enables the Lectionary selections to begin a Parousia/eschatological motif earlier in Ordinary Time. Normally during Ordinary Time the second reading does not coordinate with the gospel and first reading. We might note, however, that on this Sunday in Year A the Lectionary second reading begins Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians (in Year C the Second Letter to the Thessalonians begins on the Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time). The two letters to the Thessalonians are most probably the two earliest of our New Testament writings. They were written at a time when the early Christians expected Christ's Second Coming to happen quite soon; as such both have strong Parousia/eschatological motifs. There is a sense of immediacy in the readings that is hard for us in our day and age to pick up. We hardly live every day thinking about Christ's Second Coming. This is exactly what this time of year invites us to do!

"Parousia" and "eschatological" are terms handed down to us from the Greek-speaking part of our origins. "Parousia" refers to Christ's Second Coming and will include the end of this world as we know it, general judgment, and general resurrection. "Eschatological" refers to the end time of fulfillment and glory, when all will be gathered back to the Father.

About Liturgical Music

Music suggestions: Numerous hymns of praise abound, but particularly appropriate for this Sunday would be ones that call us to give God the glory that belongs to the creator of all. Examples of such hymns available in many resources include "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above"; "Praise to the Lord"; "God, We Praise You"; and "O God beyond All Praising." A fitting choice for Communion would be Paul Inwood's "Center of My Life" (BB, G3). Erik Routley's challenging "What Does the Lord Require" (W4) reminds us the tribute we are to bring God is to "Do justly; love mercy; walk humbly with your God." This hymn would be most appropriate as the recessional song.

Carl Daw's text "Baited, the Question Rose" (HG, W4) was written to accord with this gospel. The final verse adds a very creative dimension to the question of whose image is on the coin: "May we discern, O God, Your daily gifts of grace; Show us your image freshly coined In ev'ry heart and face." The tune to which this song is set will be unfamiliar to most assemblies, as will its dissonant harmonic structure. Both tune and structure, however, fit well this confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees. The hymn could be used effectively as a choir prelude.

OCTOBER 19, 2014
TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 15:4a, 5b

R¹. Alleluia, alleluia.

Remain in me as I remain in you, says the Lord.
Whoever remains in me bears much fruit.

R². Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 25:14-30; L157A

Jesus told his disciples this parable:

“A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them.

To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one—to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five.

Likewise, the one who received two made another two.

But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master’s money.

“After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them.

The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five.

He said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.’

His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant.

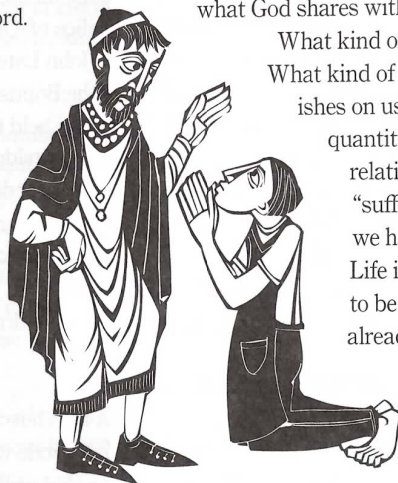
Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities.

Come, share your master’s joy.’

Then the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two talents.

See, I have made two more.’

His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant.



Reflecting on the Gospel

Such trust this master had in these three servants! A talent was a huge amount of money—by some calculations in today’s economy a talent was about fifteen years’ worth of wages, approaching a million dollars. So even the servant given the one talent was given a huge amount of money. The parable has an important lesson for us: the wealth of God has no limits; neither are there limits to what God shares with us. What a remarkable God!

What kind of master entrusts his slaves with this kind of wealth? What kind of God shares divine Life with adopted children? God lavishes on us divine Life (call it grace, if you will). God’s Life isn’t a quantity to be measured, however, like talents. God’s Life is a relationship that can never be exhausted. We can never have “sufficient” talents. But we are always called to increase what we have. The curious thing about God’s generosity with divine Life is that the richer in it we become, the more likely we are to be faithful in the small matters so we can grow in what we already have. No, the number of talents we have really doesn’t matter in the face of God’s gifts, which are incalculable—ultimately, a share in the “master’s joy,” the messianic banquet.

Every servant in this gospel parable is given riches by the master with the expectation that each servant will increase what has been given. Even one talent was a significant amount of riches. To bury it was to waste its potential. The servant who does so out of fear, wickedness, laziness is condemned by the master upon his return and loses even what he has. The wealth each of us has been given by our Master is a share in his very Life. Even a small amount is an incalculable richness. We will be judged by how we have chosen to allow this Life to increase, to grow within us. To choose otherwise is to bury our very selves.

Living the Paschal Mystery

God’s Life within us has enormous potential. We are to grow into the rich persons God intends us to be. In our everyday living of the Gospel we can be fearful or lazy. We can be safe. We can do what is minimally necessary—go to Mass, get to confession, say our daily prayers—but take no risks. Real growth in our potential and the Life God has given us comes in taking risks. We risk dying to self and increasing our Life when we see someone we don’t know poor and in need (see the first reading) and still reach out to him or her. We risk dying to self and increasing our Life when we share our own “talents” by volunteering for a liturgical ministry or for one of the parish committees, even if we feel others may be more qualified. We risk dying to self and increasing our Life by sharing our abundance with others who are less fortunate.

Always, though, when we risk dying to self, we receive from God an abundance of Life because in the dying to self we are more perfectly conformed to Christ. The shock of this gospel is the extravagance of what is being given to us. All we need to do is be faithful in “small matters.” Then we, indeed, will “share [in our] master’s joy.” God’s Life is given to us so that we can have an even greater abundance of Life. We will be judged at the end of time not by quantity, but by how well we have used our potential and increased the goodness and dignity, the Life and love within us and within others. When we have lived God’s Life well, we hear our judgment: “Come, share your master’s joy.”

Continued in Appendix A, p. 300.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: entrusted his possessions to them, five more, two more, buried your talent, throw . . . into the darkness

To the point: Every servant in this gospel parable is given riches by the master with the expectation that each servant will increase what has been given. Even one talent was a significant amount of riches. To bury it was to waste its potential. The servant who does so out of fear, wickedness, laziness is condemned by the master upon his return and loses even what he has. The wealth each of us has been given by our Master is a share in his very Life. Even a small amount is an incalculable richness. We will be judged by how we have chosen to allow this Life to increase, to grow within us. To choose otherwise is to bury our very selves.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: Unlike the “wicked, lazy servant” in the gospel, this faithful and loving wife works diligently to bring good to others and is judged praiseworthy for increasing the quality of life within and around her.

to our experience: When facing any kind of judgment, our first response is to be uncomfortable. Upon reflection, when our choices and behaviors have led to fuller Life for ourselves and others, we know we have nothing to fear from a judgment. Indeed, we can even look forward to it.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Together the first reading and psalm offer a balanced image of a woman and a man who, each in their respective social roles, is faithful to God’s desires about the manner of human living. Both texts are couched in the domestic terms that characterized much of Hebrew life and understanding, but the Lectionary’s intent is to use them as a model or pattern for all sorts of lifestyles, vocations, and situations in life. In both cases the one who “fears the Lord” is faithful in carrying out the ordinary everyday demands of covenant living. She or he cares not only for those for whom they are responsible but also reaches out to whomever is in need (first reading). For both, the fidelity and generosity of their way of living flows back to them in abundant blessings. And Jesus tells us that the greatest blessing is a share in God’s own joy (gospel). May our singing of this psalm be a confident acknowledgment that we have been given the “talent” to live in this way and that we already experience its blessedness.

to psalmist preparation: The text of this responsorial psalm can be off-putting unless you see it in conjunction with the first reading and gospel. The Lectionary’s choice of this psalm is not to elevate the role of husband over wife (although Hebrew thought and culture would have done so at the time the psalm was written), but to celebrate the blessedness that comes to any person who is faithful in daily living and ordinary relationships to the demands of discipleship. As you prepare to sing it, spend some time reflecting on the discipleship demands of daily living and ordinary relationships that belong to your life. How are you being faithful? How are you blessed because of your fidelity?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- Some ways I am able to double the wealth that God has given me is . . . The Life this increases is . . .
- I am tempted to bury my “talent”—my very self—when . . .
- I fear God’s judgment when . . . I welcome God’s judgment when . . .

PRESIDERS

In my ministry, the wealth God has given me calls me to growth when . . . I call others to growth when . . .

DEACONS

My serving ministry increases Life for others when I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

The manner of my hospitality is a gift to others of my very self and life when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

The kind of judgment my manner of carrying out my music ministry passes on me is . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

In my serving, I am like the good wife in the first reading when I . . .

LECTORS

The traits of the good wife in the first reading I emulate when I prepare for my ministry are . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The wealth of Life that I receive by remaining faithful to the small matters in my ministry and discipleship is . . .

CELEBRATION

Model Penitential Act

Presider: To prepare for this liturgy, let us reflect on how faithful we have been in choosing to grow in the wealth of Life God has given us . . . [pause]

Lord Jesus, you are God's gift of Life to us: Lord . . .

Christ Jesus, you will come again in glory to judge your people: Christ . . .

Lord Jesus, you are God's blessing for those who are faithful: Lord . . .

Homily Points

- A piano student who does not practice will not grow into a proficient musician; parents who do not invest time and energy in the formation of their children from birth onward curtail their growth in values and acceptable behaviors; a gardener who does not water plants often and early stunts their growth and even can kill them. Those who do not choose to nurture the divine Life given to them will bring upon themselves the judgment of losing their very selves.
- In this gospel parable directing our attention to the end times and final judgment, Jesus challenges us to choose daily to increase the incalculable riches—God's very Life—God has given us. This requires us to choose trust over fear, good over wickedness, disciplined work over laziness. Jesus challenges us to be faithful servants who choose to allow this Life to increase, to grow within us. To choose otherwise is to bury our very selves.
- What are the riches God has given us? The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, union with Christ in his Body, adoption as God's children and heirs of the kingdom. What does it mean to increase these riches? To invest in bringing goodness and love to others, to expend energy making God's Presence in the world evident, to reach out to anyone in need. What reward do we receive? Even more of God's Life, even a greater bond of unity with Christ and others. We find our very selves.

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Presider: God has given us a share in the richness of divine Life. Let us pray that we be faithful to the gift of Life we have received.

Response:



Cantor:



That all members of the church work diligently to grow in the divine Life given to them . . . [pause]

That people of all nations choose trust over fear, good over wickedness, disciplined work over laziness for the good of all . . . [pause]

That those who are dying may find comfort in the hope of sharing in the Master's joy . . . [pause]

That all of us gathered here remain faithful in even small matters of following Jesus . . . [pause]

Presider: Saving God, you give us the riches of your divine Life: help us to act with goodness and integrity so that we fear not your judgment and come to the fullness of Life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Let us pray

Pause for silent prayer

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Prov 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

When one finds a worthy wife,
her value is far beyond pearls.
Her husband, entrusting his heart to her,
has an unfailing prize.
She brings him good, and not evil,
all the days of her life.
She obtains wool and flax
and works with loving hands.
She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her fingers ply the spindle.
She reaches out her hands to the poor,
and extends her arms to the needy.
Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting;
the woman who fears the LORD is to be
praised.
Give her a reward for her labors,
and let her works praise her at the city
gates.

CATECHESIS

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

R. (cf. 1a) Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Blessed are you who fear the LORD,
who walk in his ways!

For you shall eat the fruit of your
handiwork;
blessed shall you be, and favored.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
in the recesses of your home;
your children like olive plants
around your table.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the LORD.

The LORD bless you from Zion:
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

SECOND READING

1 Thess 5:1-6

Concerning times and seasons, brothers
and sisters,
you have no need for anything to be
written to you.

For you yourselves know very well that
the day of the Lord will come
like a thief at night.

When people are saying, "Peace and
security,"
then sudden disaster comes upon them,
like labor pains upon a pregnant
woman,
and they will not escape.

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in
darkness,
for that day to overtake you like a thief.
For all of you are children of the light
and children of the day.
We are not of the night or of darkness.
Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do,
but let us stay alert and sober.

About Liturgy

Liturgy committee assessment: Parish liturgy committees can sometimes get so bogged down in the planning and preparation of all the parish liturgies that they fail to recognize the multiple "talents" that the group shares and that are present in the larger assembly. Since we are almost at the end of a liturgical year, it may be good to take stock of the talents and needs of the liturgy committee.

This might be done quite simply. In the context of the opening prayer for a meeting, have each member list on a piece of paper what it is they contribute to the working of the committee (this isn't just in terms of things they do but virtues they offer as well). Then share and compare the lists. Where is there overlapping? How well do the members complement (and compliment!) each other? Is there anything lacking in the group that hinders the work of the committee? If so, search for new members that have those particular talents, create subcommittees so the work isn't overly burdensome, and discover new ways to make use of the many talents available from the assembly. Sometimes all we need to do is ask!

About Liturgical Music

Music suggestions: Each of us has been gifted by God to serve the mission of the church and the needs of the world. "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending" (HG, WC, WS, W4) reminds us of this truth and calls us to respond with diligence and fidelity. This hymn would be appropriate for the entrance song. A suitable choice for the recessional would be Ruth Duck's "Moved by the Gospel" (SS; the collection *Dancing in the Universe* [GIA 3833]). In this hymn we call one another to use our gifts and talents in varied ways to further God's kingdom and to express "the shape of holiness." We also call upon the Spirit to "breathe among us" and "inspire the work we do . . . according to your will."

NOVEMBER 16, 2014
THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME