

GOSPEL THOUGHTS FOR AUGUST 2021



**The Gospel offers forgiveness for
the past, new life for the present,
and hope for the future.**

John Sentamu

Gospel Thought for Today

1st August: Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: John 6:24-35

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there,
they themselves got into boats
and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

And when they found him across the sea they said to him,
"Rabbi, when did you get here?"

Jesus answered them and said,

"Amen, amen, I say to you,
you are looking for me not because you saw signs
but because you ate the loaves and were filled.

Do not work for food that perishes
but for the food that endures for eternal life,
which the Son of Man will give you.

For on him the Father, God, has set his seal."

So they said to him,

"What can we do to accomplish the works of God?"

Jesus answered and said to them,

"This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent."

So they said to him,

"What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you?"

What can you do?

Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written:

He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

So Jesus said to them,

"Amen, amen, I say to you,

it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven;

my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven
and gives life to the world."

So they said to him,

"Sir, give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them,

"I am the bread of life;

whoever comes to me will never hunger,

and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Sir, give us this bread always."

Such plea runs parallel to the words Jesus taught us to say to the Father: "Give us this day our daily bread". Jesus knew very well the hunger of the world for Him that He willed to take the humble form of bread. We are so blessed that this bread is available for us to receive in the Mass. Just like ordinary food that must

be shared, Our Lord – in the form of bread – must be shared with others, especially the poor, the outcast, and those who do not know Him yet. It is unfortunate to note how some Church leaders have used Holy Communion as a wall that divides the saints and sinners in our community. Such action, for me, defeats the very words of Christ: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.” Indeed, as Pope Francis once said: “The Eucharist is essential for us: it is Christ who wishes to enter our lives and fill us with his grace. The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak”.

- **What is Holy Communion for you?**
- **What can you do to satisfy the world’s hunger for Jesus?**
- **How can you encourage more people to receive Jesus in the Eucharist?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Give us this day Yourself, our daily bread. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

2nd August: Memorial of St Peter Julian Eymard, Priest

Gospel: John 6:24-35

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist,
he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself.
The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns.
When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd,
his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.
When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said,
“This is a deserted place and it is already late;
dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages
and buy food for themselves.”
He said to them, “There is no need for them to go away;
give them some food yourselves.”
But they said to him,
“Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.”
Then he said, “Bring them here to me,”
and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.
Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven,
he said the blessing, broke the loaves,
and gave them to the disciples,
who in turn gave them to the crowds.

They all ate and were satisfied,
and they picked up the fragments left over—
twelve wicker baskets full.
Those who ate were about five thousand men,
not counting women and children.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

“There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.”

As a steward in our parish weekend Masses, I have come across some parishioners who have been unable to book for a Mass but came along just the same, hoping there is a space for them in church. I guess my fellow stewards would agree with me that we could not turn away anyone who would like to avail of the Eucharist if that is possible. Often, spaces would become available. It could be because someone cancelled or did not turn up or perhaps there is just enough room in God’s house! The feeding of “about five thousand men, not counting women and children” in today’s Gospel tells us the richness of the Eucharist. Everyone is nourished and there are still leftovers. St Peter Julian Eymard, whose feast we celebrate today, once said “The Holy Eucharist is like a divine storehouse filled with every virtue; God has placed it in the world so that everyone may draw from it.”

- **What virtues can you draw from the Eucharist?**
- **Who else, apart from you and your loved ones, can be nourished by the Eucharist?**
- **What do you do with leftovers and why?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the example and prayers of St Peter Julian Eymard may we also resolve to “bring all the world to the knowledge and love of our Lord; to preach nothing but Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Eucharistic.” Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

3rd August: Tuesday of the Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus made the disciples get into a boat
and precede him to the other side of the sea,
while he dismissed the crowds.

After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

When it was evening he was there alone.

Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore,

was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it.
During the fourth watch of the night,
he came toward them, walking on the sea.
When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified.
"It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear.
At once Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."
Peter said to him in reply,
"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."
He said, "Come."
Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.
But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened;
and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"
Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him,
and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
After they got into the boat, the wind died down.
Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying,
"Truly, you are the Son of God."

After making the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret.
When the men of that place recognized him,
they sent word to all the surrounding country.
People brought to him all those who were sick
and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak,
and as many as touched it were healed.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

Fr John's homilies would not be complete without the words "Take courage..." As a Christian, we have that responsibility to spread the Gospel to everyone. It is no easy task. There are moments when everything looks rosy. But there are instances when things become thorny or stormy as what the disciples experienced in today's Gospel. Trials, rejection, and all sorts of persecution could overwhelm and pull us down. Such challenges can often mask the Lord out of the picture – the frightened disciples mistook Him as a ghost. Jesus is aware of what lies ahead of His followers. He knows and understands our strengths and limitations. If your efforts of sharing the Gospel seems fruitless, let His words reassure you of His loving presence.

- **How do trials in life make you a more courageous follower of Christ?**
- **When was the last time you gave words of assurance to a disheartened fellow Christian?**
- **How do you keep yourself aware of God's presence regardless if you are on peaceful or stormy waters?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. May Your words of reassurance fan the flames of love in our hearts to soldier on. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

4th August: Memorial of Saint John Vianney, Priest

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

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 he did not say a word in answer to her. His 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 him 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 her daughter was healed from that hour.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."

St John Vianney encountered numerous obstacles before achieving his vision. Due to lack of formal education, he struggled with his studies in the seminary, but carried on until he was ordained a priest. In his parish, he came across people who were indifferent to the faith. Yet, he was determined to touch the hearts of his parishioners through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, visiting the poor, organizing patronal feast days, and founding *La Providence*, a home for girls. St John mirrored the example of the Canaanite woman in today's Gospel. Both had a strong faith that kept them focused in what their hearts were seeking: for the Canaanite woman, it was her daughter to be healed; for St John it was to become a priest. As St John once said "Courage, my soul, if you work with God, you shall, indeed, do the work, but He will bless it."

- **How true is the saying "God helps those who help themselves" for you?**
- **How do you react when your prayer seems to be unanswered?**
- **In what ways do you work with God?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St John Vianney, strengthen us, especially all parish priests, in faith that we may win many souls for You. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

5th August: Memorial of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome

Gospel: Luke 11:27-28

While Jesus was speaking,
a woman from the crowd called out and said to him,
"Blessed is the womb that carried you
and the breasts at which you nursed."
He replied, "Rather, blessed are those
who hear the word of God and observe it."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

At the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, "the largest church in the world honoring God through Mary", one can find the relics of the Baby Jesus' crib beneath the main altar. For me, this is quite appropriate because the basilica was dedicated in honour of Mary, the Mother of God. The dedication happened shortly after the Council of Ephesus affirmed Mary's role as "Theotokos" (Mother of God). In today's Gospel, Jesus highlighted the importance of hearing God's word and observing it. Far from denying how blessed His Mother was, Jesus affirmed her greatness. The Annunciation story tells us how Mary humbly and generously accepted her calling to be the Mother of God. Fast forward, at the foot of the Cross, she exhibited the same attitude when her dying Son entrusted us all to her care. Mary's graciousness would not be possible had she not heard God's word and observed it. St Augustine once said that Mary "conceived (Jesus) in the mind before conceiving in the womb; in the heart before the flesh". Today's feast day challenges us to be like Mary.

- **How do you hear the word of God amidst many distractions?**
- **How do you bear God's word in your life?**
- **How do you strive to live as a spiritual child of Mary?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of Mary, Your Mother and ours, help us to always hear, observe, and proclaim Your living Word. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

6th August: Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

Gospel: Mark 9:2-10

Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them.

As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Rabbi, it is good that we are here!"

Visiting a church first (or perhaps many) times, I would say the same words that Peter said when he witnessed Jesus transfigured in His glory. Being in God's presence gives me a feel of how it is to be like a child: in full trust and awe before its parent. Alone with God is like going up a mountain. Leaving behind people, work, and other commitments temporarily, we spend that 'me time' with the Lord. Being with Him, we come as we are; we have nothing to hide. We pour out our restless hearts on Him; doing so, we become at ease. Refreshed, we come down from the mountain like Peter, James, and John ready to continue with our mission. Take note that Jesus too went down with them. He walks with us until we reach our final destination: living in the presence of God eternally.

- **Apart from a church, where else have you experienced God's presence and why?**
- **What makes you come back to a sacred place?**
- **How does you walk with God today?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. It is good to that we are here! Restored by Your healing Word, may we become bearers of hope for a world that longs for You. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

7th August: Saturday of the Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Matthew 17:14-20

A man came up to Jesus, knelt down before him, and said,
"Lord, have pity on my son, who is a lunatic and suffers severely;
often he falls into fire, and often into water.
I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him."
Jesus said in reply,
"O faithless and perverse generation, how long will I be with you?
How long will I endure you?
Bring the boy here to me."
Jesus rebuked him and the demon came out of him,
and from that hour the boy was cured.
Then the disciples approached Jesus in private and said,
"Why could we not drive it out?"
He said to them, "Because of your little faith.
Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed,
you will say to this mountain,
'Move from here to there,' and it will move.
Nothing will be impossible for you."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Why could we not drive it out?"

There are moments in our life when we ask why things do not seem to work in spite going by the book. We feel stressed out and frustrated like the man who approached Jesus to heal his son in today's Gospel. When the disciples approached the Lord privately, He told them what was lacking: faith. Perhaps this too is lacking when we could not drive out the demons besetting our life, be they bad habits, vice, or sin. It is not enough that we go by the book. We have to put our heart and soul in changing our lives for the better. We need to have faith, not just a little, but "the size of a mustard seed". A faith that size can move mountains. Having such faith means not relying on ourselves completely, but being aware that God works with us or better still, that we cooperate with God. This first Saturday of the month, let us ask Our Lady to help us to be a people of faith.

- **How long will Jesus endure your lack of faith?**

- **What do you do when your efforts to be holy seem not to be working?**
- **How much do you believe in Jesus' saying that "Nothing will be impossible for you"?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of Mama Mary, increase our faith so that together with You we may do what seems to be humanly impossible. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

8th August: Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: John 6:41-51

The Jews murmured about Jesus because he said,
"I am the bread that came down from heaven,"
and they said,

"Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph?
Do we not know his father and mother?
Then how can he say,

'I have come down from heaven'?"

Jesus answered and said to them,
"Stop murmuring among yourselves.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him,
and I will raise him on the last day.

It is written in the prophets:

They shall all be taught by God.

Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me.

Not that anyone has seen the Father
except the one who is from God;
he has seen the Father.

Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever believes has eternal life.

I am the bread of life.

Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died;
this is the bread that comes down from heaven
so that one may eat it and not die.

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 Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

“Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph?”

Jesus’ contemporaries could not stand Him anymore. They could not accept that someone they knew very well has become a preacher. And not only a preacher, but someone who presents Himself as the bread that came down from heaven. They failed to rise up from their familiarity to full belief in Jesus. We have the opportunity to receive our Lord in Holy Communion every week or even every day. As we religiously observe such practice, we come to know more Our Lord. We become familiar with Him. We need to keep an eye though that such familiarity would not make us complacent followers. The challenge of today’s Gospel is for us to use that familiarity to deepen our faith, hope, and love for Jesus who is present in the Blessed Sacrament.

- **How much do you know Jesus?**
- **Does Jesus’ teaching that He is the living bread make you uneasy? Why or why not?**
- **How did the pandemic make you appreciate more the Holy Mass?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. May every time we receive You in Holy Communion bring us closer to You so that we may share Your life to the world. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

9th August: Memorial of Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, virgin and martyr

Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus told his disciples this parable:
"The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise ones replied,

'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.
Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.'
While they went off to buy it,
the bridegroom came
and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him.
Then the door was locked.
Afterwards the other virgins came and said,
'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!'
But he said in reply,
'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.'
Therefore, stay awake,
for you know neither the day nor the hour."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"The bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him."

St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, one of the six patrons of Europe, was born from a Jewish family. As a teenager, she questioned the existence of God. Her love of philosophy led her to search for the truth. This eventually brought her to the Catholic faith. Inspired by the writings of St Teresa of Avila, she decided to become a Catholic. Years later she became a Carmelite nun. At the height of the Nazis' persecution of the Jews, St Teresa Benedicta suffered with her people. To keep her safe, she transferred from one convent to another. She was arrested in Holland and died in a gas chamber in Auschwitz. Her nurturing and witnessing of the faith and solidarity with fellow Jews mirrored the five wise virgins in today's Gospel. With her lamp filled with oil – the oil of welcoming and anointing - she was ready to meet her Bridegroom – Jesus.

- **How ready are you to meet Jesus when your time is up?**
- **How do you keep your lamp lit for the Lord's coming?**
- **How can you support those persecuted because of their faith, race, or culture?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, make us wiser in bearing witness to Your truth and compassion. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

10th August: Feast of Saint Lawrence, Deacon and Martyr

Gospel: John 12:24-26

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies,
it remains just a grain of wheat;
but if it dies, it produces much fruit.

Whoever loves his life loses it,
and whoever hates his life in this world
will preserve it for eternal life.

Whoever serves me must follow me,
and where I am, there also will my servant be.
The Father will honor whoever serves me."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"...unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat."

As one of the seven deacons of Rome, St Lawrence ministered to the poor. At the height of the Roman persecution, St Lawrence distributed Church money to the needy instead of handing them over to the greedy Emperor Valerian. Enraged, the emperor had the deacon roasted on a gridiron. Those who have witnessed his martyrdom were converted to the faith. Our life as Christians is a life of constant giving. Husbands and wives give their life for each other for a lifetime. Parents devote their lives for the good of their children. Frontliners soldier on to fight an invisible enemy called Covid-19. We may not necessarily become a martyr, but through our daily loving of our neighbor, we are able to give life for others. Only then can our life be fruitful.

- **How do you give your life away?**
- **How and when have you found meaning in your life?**
- **How can you serve others – family, community, the poor - better?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Lawrence, inspire us especially all deacons that may we bear witness to Your life-giving love. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

11th August: Memorial of Saint Clare, Virgin

Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus said to his disciples:

“If your brother sins against you,
go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.
If he listens to you, you have won over your brother.
If he does not listen,
take one or two others along with you,
so that every fact may be established
on the testimony of two or three witnesses.
If he refuses to listen to them, tell the Church.
If he refuses to listen even to the Church,
then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.
Amen, I say to you,
whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
Again, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth
about anything for which they are to pray,
it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.
For where two or three are gathered together in my name,
there am I in the midst of them.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells us how we ought to live as a community through fraternal correction and prayer. St Clare of Assisi was a woman ahead of her time. Together with her sisters, she wrote the first Rule for religious women. Commenting on the Testament of St Clare, the late Mother Francesca of the Annunciation wrote “[St Clare] admonishes her sisters to show the love they bear for each other by their deeds so that the sisters are able to love God and each other with greater intensity...Careful attention must be given to the establishing of relationships, it is precisely because mother Clare envisages a cloistered life that the dynamic of human relationships is of such importance.” Apart from their daily work, the sisters spend time in prayer. Prayer has been a hallmark of Jesus and His followers down through the ages. Living on “highest poverty and holy unity”, St Clare shows us how we should value relationships. Valuing relationships, we see each other as co-workers in the Master’s vineyard and prayer partners at the table of the Lord. Eight centuries have passed and her legacy continues. Whenever we pray, we open up ourselves to God. Doing so, we allow the Lord who is in our midst to heal, empower, and renew us just as He did to St Clare and our “little sisters”.

- **How important is community life and prayer to you?**

- **How did you experience the power of community prayer in your life?**
- **How do you respond to St Clare's call for simplicity and unity?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of Mother Clare of Assisi, transform our hearts to live simply and in solidarity with others. Bless the Poor Clare sisters that they would remain faithful to their founder's vision. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

12th August: Memorial of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, religious

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-19:1

Peter approached Jesus and asked him,

"Lord, if my brother sins against me,
how often must I forgive him?

As many as seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.

That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king
who decided to settle accounts with his servants.

When he began the accounting,

a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount.

Since he had no way of paying it back,

his master ordered him to be sold,

along with his wife, his children, and all his property,

in payment of the debt.

At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said,

'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.'

Moved with compassion the master of that servant

let him go and forgave him the loan.

When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants

who owed him a much smaller amount.

He seized him and started to choke him, demanding,

'Pay back what you owe.'

Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him,

'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

But he refused.

Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison

until he paid back the debt.

Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened,

they were deeply disturbed,

and went to their master and reported the whole affair.

His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant!

I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to.

Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant,

as I had pity on you?’
Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers
until he should pay back the whole debt.
So will my heavenly Father do to you,
unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.”

When Jesus finished these words, he left Galilee
and went to the district of Judea across the Jordan.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

“Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

St Jane was born in Burgundy and married Baron de Chantal at the age of twenty. Jane ably managed her husband’s estate to provide for the care of the poor and bereft. After the baron’s death, she embraced an austere life, caring for her children and her vain, fierce, and extravagant father-in-law. When she met Francis de Sales in 1604, she recognised him as the spiritual director God has chosen for her. Together they founded the Visitation Order. To her daughters in religion, Jane write many letters of reassuring directness: “Hold your eyes on God and leave the doing to him. That is all the doing you have to worry about.” Forgiving others can be a challenge especially when they keep on repeating the same sins. Jesus tells us to continuously forgive them. Let St Jane’s words to her sisters penetrate our hearts that have been hurt, forgive those who offended us, and leave the rest to God.

- **How does it feel to be forgiven/not forgiven?**
- **How often have you forgiven others?**
- **How do you trust God?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Jane Frances de Chantal, help us to give ourselves to You without counting the cost so that we may mirror Your forgiveness to the world. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

13th August: Memorial of Saint Pontian, pope and martyr, and Saint Hippolytus, priest and martyr

Gospel: Matthew 19:3-12

Some Pharisees approached Jesus, and tested him, saying,

“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?”
He said in reply, “Have you not read that from the beginning
the Creator made them male and female and said,

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?
So they are no longer two, but one flesh.
Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not separate.”
They said to him, “Then why did Moses command
that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss her?”
He said to them, “Because of the hardness of your hearts
Moses allowed you to divorce your wives,
but from the beginning it was not so.
I say to you, whoever divorces his wife
(unless the marriage is unlawful)
and marries another commits adultery.”
His disciples said to him,
“If that is the case of a man with his wife,
it is better not to marry.”
He answered, “Not all can accept this word,
but only those to whom that is granted.
Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so;
some, because they were made so by others;
some, because they have renounced marriage
for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.
Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

“Some are incapable of marriage because ... they have renounced marriage
for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.”

St Pontian was elected Pope in 230. At this time, the priest Hippolytus was in
active schism, ruling as an anti-pope. In 235, during the persecution of Maximus,
Pontian and Hippolytus were exiled to Sardinia and died there of ill treatment, but
not before Hippolytus had reconciled himself to the Church. St Hippolytus once
wrote: “So let us not be at enmity with ourselves, but change our way of life
without delay. For Christ who is God, exalted above all creation, has taken away
man’s sins and has refashioned our fallen nature. God is not beggarly, and for the
sake of his own glory he has given us a share of his divinity.” Priests, like Sts
Pontian and Hippolytus, are those whom Jesus identified to have given up
marriage for the sake of God’s Kingdom. As we honour these two saints, let us
ask the Lord to send more priests to proclaim His healing forgiveness to all.

- **How do you support the vocation to the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life?**
- **How can you become an agent of reconciliation in the community?**
- **How does God share His divinity with you?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of
Sts Pontian and Hippolytus, change our way of life without delay for the Father’s
glory and the salvation of all. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

14th August: Memorial of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, Priest and Martyr

Gospel: Matthew 19:13-15

Children were brought to Jesus that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." After he placed his hands on them, he went away.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Let the children come to me..."

St Maximilian, a Polish Franciscan friar, promoted devotion to Mary under the title "Immaculata". In February 1941, he was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Auschwitz, where he covertly continued his priestly ministry: praying, consoling, hearing confessions. When a young father cried out in agony as he was sentenced to the starvation bunker, Maximilian offered to take his place. He died by lethal injection after surviving for two weeks. Auschwitz survivor Jerzy Bielecki called Maximilian's self-offering "a shock filled with hope, bringing new life and strength...It was like a powerful shaft of light in the darkness of the camp." In today's Gospel, Jesus rebuked His disciples for stopping people from bringing little children to Him. St Maximilian lived with childlike confidence to God and to the Virgin Mary throughout his ministry and up to the point when he offered his life in the concentration camp. In one of his writings, he said, "If you wish to live and die happily, try to deepen this filial love for our most kind-hearted heavenly Mother."

- **As a Christian, are you childlike or childish? Why?**
- **How can you lead others to Jesus?**
- **How do you deepen your filial love to Mary?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Maximilian Kolbe, transform our hearts to be childlike that we may be worthy of Your Kingdom. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

15th August: Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Gospel: Luke 1:39-56

Mary set out
and traveled to the hill country in haste
to a town of Judah,
where she entered the house of Zechariah
and greeted Elizabeth.
When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
the infant leaped in her womb,
and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit,
cried out in a loud voice and said,
"Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord
would be fulfilled."

And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm,
and has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever."

Mary remained with her about three months
and then returned to her home.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"...the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his Name."

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven reveals that what God begins, He brings to completion. In predestining her to be the Mother of the Saviour, the Lord prepared her through the Immaculate Conception, which preserved her from original sin. Grace continued to expand and flower within her, giving her strength to stand by Jesus on the cross. She was preserved from the corruption of the tomb and enjoys already a bodily participation in the glory of Christ in heaven. From there, she prays for us – that grace may come to perfection in us, and that we may share in her glory with Jesus.

- **How did you respond to God doing great things for you?**
- **Do you look forward to be in heaven one day?**
- **How do you prepare yourself to be with Jesus, Mary, and the saints in heaven?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of Mary grant us a heart that acknowledges Your greatness and looks forward to the eternal life in Your presence. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

16th August: Memorial of Saint Stephen of Hungary

Gospel: Matthew 25:14-23

Jesus told his disciples this parable:

"A man who was 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.
Since you were faithful in small matters,
I will give you great responsibilities.
Come, share your master's joy!''''

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

'Well done, my good and faithful servant.'

St Stephen was born Vaik in 975. He was baptized as Stephen at the age of ten, and around the year 1000 was crowned the first king of Hungary. With prudence and charity, he worked to create a genuine Christian culture within his realm, founded on laws to protect orphans, widows, and the impoverished serfs. In his later years, Stephen patiently suffered physical illness and the continual political intrigues of his relations, who sought the throne. He died in 1038. His coronation is celebrated by Hungarians as the birth of their country. We may not be crowned as king, but God has entrusted us with some talents. Inspired by St Stephen, let us use these for God's glory and the good of His people!

- **What talents has God entrusted to you?**
- **How do you use these talents?**
- **What remarks would you like to hear from God when your time is up?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Stephen of Hungary, may we generously offer our talents especially to those who in need. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

17th August: Memorial of Our Lady of Knock

Gospel: Matthew 19:23-30

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

Again I say to you,

it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God."

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus looked at them and said,

“For men this is impossible,
but for God all things are possible.”
Then Peter said to him in reply,
“We have given up everything and followed you.
What will there be for us?”
Jesus said to them, “Amen, I say to you
that you who have followed me, in the new age,
when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory,
will yourselves sit on twelve thrones,
judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters
or father or mother or children or lands
for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more,
and will inherit eternal life.
But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

“And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more.”

In August 1879, outside their church in Knock, Ireland, fifteen people witnessed an apparition of our Lady accompanied by St Joseph, St John the Evangelist, and our Lord as the Lamb of God. The site became an internationally recognized shrine. Reflecting on today’s Gospel, our faith tells us that Mary was the first disciple of Jesus. Before Peter and the rest of the apostles left their home and family, Mary has already left hers for Jesus. Fr Elwood Ferrer Smith, OP, once wrote: “By Mary is the Word (Jesus) with men; by Mary are men with and in the Word.” Indeed, for leaving everything behind for the sake of Jesus’ Name, Mary received the reward that her Son spoke in the Gospel. The Church – all of us – look up to her as our Mother!

- **What are you willing to leave behind for Jesus?**
- **How does Mary’s example inspire you to be a better member of the Church?**
- **What would prevent you from entering God’s Kingdom?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of Mary, Our Lady of Knock, enable us to leave behind those that would hinder us from following You. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

18th August: Wednesday of the Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

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,

he 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,

he 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.

And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying,

'These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.'

He said to one of them in reply,

'My friend, I am not cheating you.

Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?

Take what is yours and go.

What if I wish to give this last one the same as you?

Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money?

Are you envious because I am generous?'

Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

'You too go into my vineyard.'

Just as the trees beg for one of their own to "Come now...be our king!" in the first reading (Judges 9:6-15), we are easily tempted by the illusion of being self-governing rather than ruled by the wisdom of God's plan. Sadly, buckthorn is an invasive species that out-competes native plants for light and moisture, degrades wildlife habitat, and contributes to erosion. For us, there is good news: God Himself becomes man so that we might have an anointed king of our own stock. He is incomparably generous, and never tires of His efforts to make us flourish in His vineyard – the Kingdom of heaven.

- **How often have you trusted your wisdom instead of God's?**
- **How does Jesus make you flourish in His vineyard?**
- **How can you mirror Jesus' generosity to all?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Teach us to be generous like You so that we joyfully work in Your vineyard. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

19th August: Memorial of Saint John Eudes, priest

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and the elders of the people in parables

saying, "The Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come.

A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast.'"

Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business.

The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.

The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

Then the king said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come.

Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.'

The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to meet the guests

he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment.
He said to him, 'My friend, how is it
that you came in here without a wedding garment?'
But he was reduced to silence.
Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet,
and cast him into the darkness outside,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'
Many are invited, but few are chosen."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

'Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.'

Born in 1601 in Ri, France, John took a vow of chastity at fourteen. Drawn by the Christ-centred teachings of Cardinal Berulle, he was ordained a priest of the Oratory. At this time the devastating Thirty Years War had all but destroyed the faith of the peasants. John threw himself into mission work, enthusiastically preaching over a hundred four-to-twenty-week missions to his countrymen. Struck by the great need for well-educated and self-giving priests, he founded the Society of Jesus and Mary (the Eudists) for the education of seminarians. The Order of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge was established for the care of women who had been drawn into prostitution. John died in 1680.

- **How do you prepare yourself for the Mass?**
- **How do you invite people, especially the marginalised, to the Mass?**
- **How do you make these people feel welcomed in the parish community?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St John Eudes, make us worthy to "stand in Your presence and serve You".
Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

20th August: Memorial of Saint Bernard, Abbot and Doctor of the Church

Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees,
they gathered together, and one of them,
a scholar of the law, tested him by asking,
"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"
He said to him,
"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart,

with all your soul, and with all your mind.
This is the greatest and the first commandment.
The second is like it:
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

Often called the “Last of the Fathers”, Bernard was born near Dijon, France. He joined the Cistercians and at twenty-four was sent to the “Valley of Wormwood”, where he led his fellow monks in clearing the land to found Clairvaux, the “Valley of Light”, one of the great medieval monasteries. Bernard was an austere reformer, a tireless preacher, and an affectionate correspondent. He never left a letter unanswered. In his celebrated exchange with Peter Abelard, Bernard counselled against the hubris of the intellect, insisting that theology must be rooted in Scripture and fed with prayer. “The reason for loving God is God himself,” he wrote. “The measure is to love him beyond measure.” Bernard died in 1153.

- **How do you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind?**
- **Why do you love Him this way?**
- **How does your love for God translate into love for your neighbour, including those whose actions we hate?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Bernard, may our whole life be an expression of faithful love to You and our neighbour. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

21st August: Memorial of Saint Pius X, Pope

Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12

Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying,
“The scribes and the Pharisees
have taken their seat on the chair of Moses.
Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you,
but do not follow their example.
For they preach but they do not practice.
They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry
and lay them on people’s shoulders,
but they will not lift a finger to move them.
All their works are performed to be seen.

They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels.
They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues,
greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.'
As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.'
You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers.
Call no one on earth your father;
you have but one Father in heaven.
Do not be called 'Master';
you have but one master, the Christ.
The greatest among you must be your servant.
Whoever exalts himself will be humbled;
but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"The greatest among you must be your servant."

Born in 1835 in the village of Riese, Italy, to a seamstress mother and cobbler father, Giuseppe Sarto spent most of his priestly life ministering to the people in and around Venice. As pastor, he gave to the poor from his own modest household. As Bishop of Mantua and then Patriarch of Venice, he reformed lax seminaries, yet still found time to teach catechism to children. Elected Pope Pius X in 1903, he led the Church with forthright teachings on the importance of catechesis, Catholic Action, and the errors of modernism. "I was born poor, I lived poor, I die poor" was his final testament. He died in 1914.

- **Is being a servant attractive to you? Why or why not?**
- **How do you practice Jesus' model of greatness in your family and community?**
- **How can you keep yourself humble?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Pius X grant us the heart of a servant ready to do Your will. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

22nd August: Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: John 6:60-69

Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said,
"This saying is hard; who can accept it?"
Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this,
he said to them, "Does this shock you?
What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending
to where he was before?
It is the spirit that gives life,
while the flesh is of no avail.

The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.
But there are some of you who do not believe."
Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe
and the one who would betray him.
And he said,
"For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me
unless it is granted him by my Father."

As a result of this,
many of his disciples returned to their former way of life
and no longer accompanied him.
Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"
Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
We have come to believe
and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?"

If we think of the Christian life without faith, and only from the perspective of our weaknesses and limitations, then we fail to see that Christ offers us "eternal life". His grace makes it possible for us to love one another and to be "holy and faultless". "Choose today whom you wish to serve" – the "Holy One of God" who gives us "spirit and...life". It is in serving the Lord that we "taste and see that the Lord is good".

- **What is eternal life for you?**
- **What keeps you going back to Jesus in the Eucharist week after week?**
- **Have you found everything you are looking for in Jesus? Why or why not?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Grant us the grace to always believe in what You say that we may be filled with Your Spirit and life. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

23rd August: Memorial of Saint Rose of Lima, virgin

Gospel: Matthew 13:44-46

Jesus said to his disciples:
"The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field,
which a person finds and hides again,
and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Again, the Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls.
When he finds a pearl of great price,
he goes and sells all that he has and buys it."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field..."

Rose was born in Lima, Peru, in 1586, of a Puerto Rican father and a mother of Incan descent. As a young girl, she read about Catherine of Siena, and became determined to imitate the great saint. Like Catherine, she entered the Dominican Third Order and received profound graces in prayer. Rose wore a spiked silver crown disguised with roses and slept on a bed of broken tiles – mortifications she endured for the conversion of sinners and the native Peruvians. After her death at the age of thirty-one, great crowds followed her funeral procession. Rose was canonized in 1671, the first saint born in the New World.

- **Is God's Kingdom a treasure for you?**
- **What steps do you take to gain God's Kingdom?**
- **What sort of mortification are you willing to offer for the conversion of sinners and of your locality?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word. Through the prayers and example of St Rose of Lima, make our hearts search for the treasure that will surely last – Your Kingdom. Finding it, may we zealously proclaim its coming to others. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

24th August: Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle

Gospel: John 1:45-51

Philip found Nathanael and told him,
"We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law,
and also the prophets, Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth."
But Nathanael said to him,
"Can anything good come from Nazareth?"
Philip said to him, "Come and see."
Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him,
"Here is a true child of Israel.
There is no duplicity in him."
Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?"
Jesus answered and said to him,
"Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree."

Nathanael answered him,
"Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."
Jesus answered and said to him,
"Do you believe
because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree?
You will see greater things than this."
And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you,
you will see heaven opened and the angels of God
ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

Bartholomew, one of the Twelve Apostles, is traditionally identified with Nathanael of John's Gospel. He is believed to have preached the Gospel in India and greater Armenia. St Pantaeus testified that Bartholomew had brought a copy of St Matthew's Gospel to the people of India. Bartholomew is said to have suffered the torture of being flayed, or skinned. His token in the Church's art is an oddly shaped knife, the tool for the removal of his skin, or the skin itself. In his Final Judgement scene in the Sistine Chapel, the artist Michelangelo pained his own face on Bartholomew's skin.

- **What sort of action are you going to take to show your belief that Jesus is the Son of God?**
- **Where can you bring Christ's Gospel today?**
- **How eager are you to "see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man"?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Bartholomew, make us courageous proclaimers of Your Word to a world that is not aware of its hunger for You. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

25th August: Memorial of Saint Joseph Calasanz, priest

Gospel: Matthew 18:1-5

The disciples approached Jesus and said,
"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?"
He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said,
"Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children,
you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven.
Whoever humbles himself like this child
is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.
And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."

Born in Aragon, Spain, in 1556, Joseph was ordained a priest and served with distinction, rising to the position of diocesan vicar general. In 1592 he resigned his office and went to Rome, where he spent himself in the care of abandoned children. He founded the first free public school and an order, the Piarists, to educate the poor and the disadvantaged. Joseph was unjustly accused of criminal behavior by those within his order, which led to the order's suppression. With total resignation, Joseph proclaimed: "The Lord gave, the Lord has taken back. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Jb 1:21). Joseph died in 1648. The Piarists were reinstated in 1656.

- **What does it take to be humble like a child?**
- **When was the last time you looked after someone in need?**
- **How do you face unjust accusations made against you by members of your family, workplace, or community?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Joseph Calasanz, help us to rediscover and embrace the child in us that we may be counted in Your Kingdom. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

26th August: Thursday of the Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Matthew 24:42-51

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Stay awake!

For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.

Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into.

So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.

"Who, then, is the faithful and prudent servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household to distribute to them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on his arrival finds doing so. Amen, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is long delayed,'

and begins to beat his fellow servants,
and eat and drink with drunkards,
the servant's master will come on an unexpected day
and at an unknown hour and will punish him severely
and assign him a place with the hypocrites,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Stay awake!"

Blessed is the faithful and prudent servant of the Lord who is awake and prepared for the arrival of the Master at any moment. Living with such eager expectation prevents us from settling for anything less than Jesus Christ. Such vigilance makes us increase and abound in love, strengthening our heart to be blameless in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus.

- **In what ways does the Lord come into your life?**
- **If the Lord comes to you today, what will you do and why?**
- **How do you keep yourself awake for the Lord's coming?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. "Grant us that in the time that remains we may live only for you. Because You alone we wish to love, and You alone we want to serve." Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

27th August: Memorial of Saint Monica

Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus told his disciples this parable:
"The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins
who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.
Five of them were foolish and five were wise.
The foolish ones, when taking their lamps,
brought no oil with them,
but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.
Since the bridegroom was long delayed,
they all became drowsy and fell asleep.
At midnight, there was a cry,
'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'
Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.
The foolish ones said to the wise,
'Give us some of your oil,
for our lamps are going out.'
But the wise ones replied,

'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.
Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.'
While they went off to buy it,
the bridegroom came
and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him.
Then the door was locked.
Afterwards the other virgins came and said,
'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!'
But he said in reply,
'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.'
Therefore, stay awake,
for you know neither the day nor the hour."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"...but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps."

Born around 331 in North Africa to Christian parents, Monica married Patricius, with whom she had at least three children. She kept peace in her family, quelling her husband's rages with meekness and winning the heart of her mother-in-law with kindness. Both were eventually won over to the faith. After her husband's death, Monica sought after the salvation of her son Augustine. For over fifteen years, she pursued him with earnest "tears, prayers, complaints, and laments". Augustine was received into the Church in 386 and became bishop and Doctor of the Church. Monica died in 387. Monica personifies the five wise virgins who kept their lamps burning for the coming of the Bridegroom. Her life was a journey of faith that led her to Christ, and not only did she lead herself to Him, but also her family.

- **How do you look after the spiritual needs of your family?**
- **How do you deal with unpleasant members of your family?**
- **How do you win over a wayward loved one to Christ?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Monica, grant us wisdom of heart that we may persevere in doing good to others. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

28th August: Memorial of Saint Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

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.
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 the one talent came forward and said,
'Master, I knew you were a demanding person,
harvesting where you did not plant
and gathering where you did not scatter;
so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground.
Here it is back.'
His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant!
So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant
and gather where I did not scatter?
Should you not then have put my money in the bank
so that I could have got it back with interest on my return?
Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten.
For to everyone who has,
more will be given and he will grow rich;
but from the one who has not,
even what he has will be taken away.
And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

“For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich...”

The most prolific and influential of the Latin Fathers, Augustine spent the first half of his life studying and teaching rhetoric in North Africa. He kept a concubine and adhered to the religion of the Manicheans. His mother’s prayers and the preaching of St Ambrose influenced his conversion. But, as Augustine tells it in his *Confessions*, his entry into the Church was primarily the work of God, who pursued him throughout his life. “See who I was in myself and by myself. I have destroyed myself, but he who made me remade me.” After his conversion, Augustine was made Bishop of Hippo. Later called the “Doctor of Grace”, Augustine died in 430.

- **What talents has God entrusted to you?**
- **How do you make those talents grow (or not grow)?**
- **How did you respond when God gave you more than you expected?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of St Augustine, renew us in Your love that we may faithfully use the talents You entrusted to us. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

29th August: Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. —For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds. — So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, “Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?” He responded, “Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written:
*This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines human precepts.*
You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition.”

He summoned the crowd again and said to them,
"Hear me, all of you, and understand.
Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person;
but the things that come out from within are what defile.

"From within people, from their hearts,
come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder,
adultery, greed, malice, deceit,
licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly.
All these evils come from within and they defile."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?"

The scribes and Pharisees live according to a defective understanding that disregards God's commandments and clings to human tradition. Since their hearts are far from God, it is from "men's hearts" that evils such as malice, deceit, and arrogance come. God endows us with "laws and customs" in order to rescue us from our own inadequate ideas and so that we may "have life and may enter and take possession of the land". Allowing our hearts to be formed by God's commandments, we give evidence of our wisdom and intelligence to the nations. Our docility to divine wisdom manifests our closeness to the God who guides us. "Accept and submit to the word which has been planted in you and can save your souls."

- **What human traditions prevent you from following God's commandments?**
- **What makes your heart close (or far) from God?**
- **How do you deal with evils that come from your heart?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Cleanse our hearts from whatever will hinder us from doing Your will. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

30th August: Memorial of Saints Margaret Clitherow, Anne Line, and Margaret Ward, martyrs

Gospel: Luke 4:16-30

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up,
and went according to his custom
into the synagogue on the sabbath day.
He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah.
He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

Rolling up the scroll,
he handed it back to the attendant and sat down,
and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.
He said to them,
"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."
And all spoke highly of him
and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.
They also asked, "Is this not the son of Joseph?"
He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb,
'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place
the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'"
And he said,
"Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place.
Indeed, I tell you,
there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah
when the sky was closed for three and a half years
and a severe famine spread over the entire land.
It was to none of these that Elijah was sent,
but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.
Again, there were many lepers in Israel
during the time of Elisha the prophet;
yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."
When the people in the synagogue heard this,
they were all filled with fury.
They rose up, drove him out of the town,
and led him to the brow of the hill
on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong.
But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

"...no prophet is accepted in his own native place."

Saints Margaret Clitherow, Anne Line, and Margaret Ward were executed for hiding Roman Catholic priests during the reign of Elizabeth I. Hiding and maintaining priests during that time was a capital offence. Margaret Clitherow, pregnant with her fourth child, was executed by being crushed to death. Anne and Margaret Ward died by hanging. Margaret Clitherow had three children. Her son Henry Clitherow went abroad to train as a priest and returned to work on the English Mission. These women martyrs courageously stood for their faith even when their

contemporaries turned their backs on them and on the Catholic faith. While the persecution of Roman Catholics in England is already a thing in the past, the witnessing of these holy women, continue to sustain the present Church – us – in making Christ’s Gospel come alive.

- **How can you make God’s Word fulfilled in your life?**
- **How can you support persecuted Christians across the world?**
- **How does rejection in your native place – family, neighbourhood, workplace, etc. – make you a better Christian?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Through the prayers and example of Sts Margaret Clitherow, Anne Line, and Margaret Ward, help us to bring the good news of salvation to all people. Amen.

Gospel Thought for Today

31st August: Tuesday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Luke 4:31-37

Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee.

He taught them on the sabbath,
and they were astonished at his teaching
because he spoke with authority.

In the synagogue there was a man with the spirit of an unclean demon,
and he cried out in a loud voice,

“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?
Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

Jesus rebuked him and said, “Be quiet! Come out of him!”

Then the demon threw the man down in front of them
and came out of him without doing him any harm.

They were all amazed and said to one another,

“What is there about his word?

For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits,
and they come out.”

And news of him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection:

“Have you come to destroy us?”

St Paul promises that we are “all children of light and children of the day: we do not belong to the night or to darkness”. When the power of darkness reduces us to panic – similar to how the spirit of the unclean demon cried out to our Lord – we remember that Jesus uses His authority to cast out our evil, encourage us, and

build us up. "God never meant us to experience the Retribution, but to win salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- **What evil in your heart are you ashamed of?**
- **How do you overcome the evil in your heart?**
- **When was the last time you presented to Jesus what troubles your heart?**

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word today. Full of trust in Your authority, we bring to You our heart and the evil that beset it. Make it holy for You are holy. Amen.