

JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER 2025

Living Faith

Daily Catholic Devotions

bayard

... ask and you will
receive;
seek ^{and you}
will find...

LUKE 11:9





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Mary kept all these things,
reflecting on them in her heart.

— LUKE 2:19

Dear Readers:

The words of Jesus on our magazine cover describe the power of prayer within a living faith. Prayer is talking to Jesus in a two-way conversation. Jesus invites us to tell him our hearts' desires. He longs to know our supplications, to satisfy our spiritual hungers. "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find" (Luke 11:9).



If we were talking with Jesus right now, right here, what might we be saying? Are we asking? Are we seeking? When was the last time we took the time to unpack our hearts before the One who loves us, the Maker of Our Hearts?

Each day in *Living Faith*, you are invited to receive the Word of God and then to pause to reflect and ponder. Let me suggest one additional step: After that, tell Jesus exactly what's there in your heart. In your own words. You already have his invitation.

■ PAT GOHN, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Have you ever made a pilgrimage? Maybe it's time to consider one. See page 102.

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Living Faith provides daily reflections based on a Scripture passage from the daily Mass. With readings for daily Mass listed with each devotion, this booklet helps Catholics pray and meditate in spirit with the seasons of the Church Year. Citations are from the Mass Lectionary, which is based on the *New American Bible*.

IMPRIMATUR

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Standing Trial

*Search me, O LORD, and try me;
test my soul and my heart.
For your mercy is before my eyes,
and I walk in your truth.* PSALM 26:2-3

Throughout the Old Testament, God tests his followers: He asks Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, allows Satan to bring disaster onto Job and asks for faithfulness from the exiles in Babylon. Such testing is intended to confirm the faithful by demonstrating how much their faith can endure while awaiting salvation at God's hand.

We will also endure tests in our lives, but those who trust in the Lord should have no fear. When we fail, it is an opportunity to examine our lives and ask how we might walk more closely in faith. When we succeed, it is a time to rejoice and thank the Lord for his mercy.

Lord God, help us to be prepared for whatever comes our way and to endure all things with faith and hope.

■ JONATHAN F. SULLIVAN

Genesis 21:5, 8-20a + Psalm 34:7-8, 10-13 + Matthew 8:28-34

God Is Now Here

God was with the boy as he grew up. GENESIS 21:20A

Remembering childhood events in a family can be a tricky thing. I only have one sibling to contend with, and I'm constantly amazed how differently each of us remembers shared stories of our growing up. Sometimes, things that I know happened to just me have somehow, over the years, become my brother's stories! It's no surprise, then, that over my life, even my own memories take on a different meaning or understanding depending on my age and my interpretation of the events—or perhaps because of my newer perspective as an older adult, a mother, a grandmother. While the event that happened never changes, what I see and recognize does. It's like looking at letters jumbled together: GODISNOWHERE. Do I read, “God is nowhere,” or do I see, “God is now here”?

My understanding is significant, even crucial, to recognizing the presence of God in my daily life. What does it mean when I say that God is “with us”?

■ MARÍA RUIZ SCAPERLANDA

THURSDAY, JULY 3

St. Thomas

Ephesians 2:19-22 + Psalm 117:1-2 + John 20:24-29

Jesus Is Very Real

Thomas answered and said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

JOHN 20:28

I have lived through anguish, despair and heartbreak. In those moments, I have felt the presence and comfort of God unlike any other times in my life. When those experiences pass, I am thankful for the respite of peace. Yet, a part of me misses the closeness I felt to God in my seasons of pain.

Maybe part of me is like Thomas, needing to see and feel to believe. When my memory of God’s closeness dims, I want a fresh experience to awaken it. In times of relative ease, I find that I choose to do something challenging—something that reminds me that it is *not me, but he* who holds all the power and possibility. Marathon running. Trekking in the Alps. Academic pursuits. These challenges remind me of the limits of me. I can feel God carry me when I have run out of steam. I love that feeling—my own way of poking my fingers deeper into my faith. Remembering that Jesus is very, very real.

■ KRISTIN ARMSTRONG

Kristin is a wife and mother, an author and a therapist specializing in helping people thrive during times of change.

FRIDAY, JULY 4
Independence Day, U.S.A.

Genesis 23:1-4, 19; 24:1-8, 62-67 + Psalm 106:1-5 + Matthew 9:9-13

A New Lease on Life

I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.

MATTHEW 9:13

I will never forget the words of my doctors after the post-surgery biopsy came back: “The margins are clear, and the prospects for a full recovery are excellent.” That was more than ten years ago, and it felt very much like a new lease on life. I sobbed.

This is surely what Matthew must have felt when called from his tax-collector’s post to follow Jesus. No matter the perks, to leave behind a dead-end profession that earned him the contempt of his own people to take up the path of discipleship was to be given a new lease on life.

This is what God does. He comes to call sinners to new life, and that means he comes to call me.

All of my hope, O Lord, is nowhere except in your great mercy.

■ FR. DENNIS GALLAGHER, A.A.

*Fr. Dennis is the Vice President for Mission
at Assumption University, Worcester, MA.*

*Visit Assumption.us to learn about
the Assumptionists.*

SATURDAY, JULY 5

St. Anthony Zaccaria, St. Elizabeth of Portugal

Genesis 27:1-5, 15-29 + Psalm 135:1-6 + Matthew 9:14-17

Limitless Love

Jesus answered [John's disciples], "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?"

MATTHEW 9:15

"See, I don't trust happiness," says the protagonist of a movie. The joy and love he's unexpectedly found with a widow and her son mixes with his past pain and new grief until he runs away. Can he trust God's tender mercies and receive the new wine that displaced the old thirsts? The old wineskin no longer can hold him.

Jesus' words ringingly call us to risk accepting joy and love. The true risk lies in rejecting them: Old wineskins will burst, old cloth will tear, the old self will keep us miserable. The joy of the Gospel is clear and certain but, in our present pain and confusion, can seem uncertain and dangerous to us.

Our hearts know the truth, for the Holy Spirit dwells there. As close as our next breath is the joy our hearts seek. Shall we feast on the limitless love poured into us? Shall we dare accept and share it?

■ MARY MARROCCO

SUNDAY, JULY 6
14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 66:10-14c + Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20
Galatians 6:14-18 + Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

Paradoxical Truth

*Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare
what he has done for me.* PSALM 66:16

A few years ago, I wandered into a little church in Ferrara, Italy, and saw a black and white photo of a woman religious in front of a tomb. This Sr. Veronica of the Blessed Sacrament was a Carmelite mystic who had died in 1964. Her canonization cause (in Italian) is: *SuorVeronica.org*.

I was struck, first, by the notion of running into a new-to-me saint around the corner. What surprising people and stories might I encounter anywhere if I'm paying attention?

Secondly, one of Sr. Veronica's reflections on her mystical encounters with Jesus and Mary struck me: "I would have felt like I should be silent and remain alone with God. At the same time, I would have felt like I should go to everyone and preach Love."

What a beautiful, paradoxical truth: God's loving presence embraces us securely, but because it is love, of course, it moves us to share.

Jesus, embolden me to witness to your love.

Genesis 28:10-22a + Psalm 91:1-4, 14-15 + Matthew 9:18-26

Holy Ground

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he exclaimed, “Truly, the LORD is in this spot, although I did not know it!”

GENESIS 28:16

Jesus is certainly present in the sacramental moments of our lives—whether it’s the breaking of bread in a grand cathedral or a quiet time of prayer in a small candle-lit Eucharistic chapel. But like Jacob, who discovered he was on sacred ground the morning after a rough night’s sleep on the hard ground with a rock for a pillow, we sometimes find that the sacred also comes in the most unlikely places and moments.

In these ordinary and sometimes uncomfortable places, the Lord waits for us. In that difficult visit with a dying friend, in that hard conversation, in our moments of confusion, fear and grief, God is present, waiting for us, inviting us into the glorious and holy.

Open my eyes, Lord, to the many ways and times that you make yourself known to me, to those times when you have appeared in my life when I needed you most.

■ STEVE GIVENS

Genesis 32:23-33 ✦ Psalm 17:1-3, 6-8, 15 ✦ Matthew 9:32-38

Moments of Doubt

Jacob was left there alone. Then some man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. GENESIS 32:25

We all want to make decisions that are best for ourselves and our loved ones. And we pray for guidance with assurance in God's love. Still, we may feel alone, especially if our prayers seem to go unheard. We may even wrestle with our faith when life brings sadness or suffering. And, if we're honest with ourselves, on any ordinary day, we may experience doubt. Maybe we doubt whether we're led by God's will or our own. Sometimes serious doubt leads us to question our faith (perhaps in the authority of the Church or the existence of God). Even those who seldom experience doubt will have people in their lives who not only doubt but refuse to believe in God. Let us remember that prophets and saints also had moments of doubt or uncertainty. With hope, we continue to pray that God's mercy sustains us.

■ DEBORAH A. MEISTER

Deborah Meister works as a Catholic writer from St. Louis, MO, and engages with life through art, music and three grandsons.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9

St. Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions

Genesis 41:55-57; 42:5-7a, 17-24a + Psalm 33:2-3, 10-11, 18-19

Matthew 10:1-7

Redeeming Past Hurts

*The LORD brings to nought the plans of nations;
he foils the designs of peoples.* PSALM 33:10

Today's first reading opens as Joseph addresses the very brothers who sold him into slavery. Pleading grain for their starving families, they don't know their own brother with whom they're speaking. Joseph, immediately recognizing them, turns away and weeps.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives his disciples the ability to heal with authority over unclean spirits. He loves these men, including Judas Iscariot, who will betray him.

Like Joseph and Jesus, many of us have known betrayal and suffering at the hands of others. These pains are real.

Still, God reworked Joseph's misfortune to feed nations. And through God's love, Jesus' betrayal and sufferings secured salvation for us all. Certainly, we too can invite our Lord to transform and redeem the pain in our lives, for good, as he wills.

Thank you, Lord, for transforming the ugly circumstances of our lives into real redemption.

■ KATHLEEN SWARTZ MCQUAIG

Genesis 44:18-21, 23b-29; 45:1-5 + Psalm 105:16-21 + Matthew 10:7-15

‘God Sent Me’

It was really for the sake of saving lives that God sent me here ahead of you. GENESIS 45:5

We love happy endings: A couple finds each other. The dog makes his way back home. The returning soldier embraces his children. The ugly duckling becomes a swan.

Happy endings drive Hollywood’s hits, but they are also very much a part of our religious heritage. After all, the happiest of endings is the salvation promised by the resurrected Christ.

Today’s first reading offers the archetype of a happy ending story. Jealous brothers sell Joseph into slavery. Years later, he becomes their savior during a time of great famine. What makes it such a happy ending is Joseph’s recognition that God had a great plan for him. It was not easy, but Joseph rose from a mere slave to being Pharaoh’s trusted confidant and vizier of all Egypt. And in this role, he was able to rescue his father and his entire family from starvation. Joseph trusted in the Lord and became a savior of his people.

Heavenly Father, let me trust in you always.

FRIDAY, JULY 11

St. Benedict

Genesis 46:1-7, 28-30 + Psalm 37:3-4, 18-19, 27-28, 39-40

Matthew 10:16-23

Incline the Ear of the Heart

[Jacob] answered, "Here I am." GENESIS 46:2

St. Benedict begins his famous *Rule* with the word *Listen*. Then the revered spiritual master and founder of Western monasticism writes, "Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart."

To *listen* to God is the heart of living faith. Every biblical encounter of humanity with God involves the act of listening to God who speaks.

After arriving at Beersheba, Israel offers sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac. Then the author of Genesis describes the astonishing in-breaking of divine grace when God, speaking to Israel in a vision by night, calls him by name, "Jacob! Jacob!" Jacob *listens* and answers, "Here I am."

God calls each of us by name to reveal the depths of divine love and mercy into the joys and challenges of life. How does God speak today? Do I incline the ear of my heart so I can listen carefully to a loving God who calls me by name?

■ JEM SULLIVAN, PH.D.

Jem Sullivan, Ph.D., teaches at The Catholic University of America and is an author and a catechist.

Genesis 49:29-32; 50:15-26a ✦ Psalm 105:1-4, 6-7 ✦ Matthew 10:24-33

God Knows Us

Even all the hairs of your head are counted. MATTHEW 10:30

How intimately God knows us! No one knows us like God does: not our spouse, our children, our colleagues, our best friends. God knows us better than we know ourselves! We spend much of our lives attempting to figure ourselves out, making and then correcting our mistakes, uncovering our true selves.

Over the years, we may try out different selves. The teenager bounds out of the house with green hair and heavy eye make-up. The young adult becomes the nurse, the accountant, the cashier and, perhaps later, the parent.

We often “let down our hair” when relaxing with family and friends. Yet, sometimes we don’t even recognize ourselves, later wondering, “Why did I do or say that?” At retirement, we may ask, “Who am I now?”

In our elder years, we look back and marvel at how we have changed, physically, emotionally, spiritually. All the while God knows us, loves us, keeps us.

Lord, that I may be known and counted by you!

SUNDAY, JULY 13
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Deuteronomy 30:10-14 ✦ Psalm 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36, 37
or Psalm 19:8-11 ✦ Colossians 1:15-20 ✦ Luke 10:25-37

Good Neighbors

And who is my neighbor? LUKE 10:29

Last year, I was driving along a two-lane highway when something suddenly occurred—my front driver's side tire fell off my car. I was able to steer the car safely to the side of the road. As soon as I pulled over, a car going the other direction also pulled to the side of the road after having witnessed what had happened. I was grateful for this man because I was clueless and helpless. I didn't know whom to call or what to do. Fortunately, that man called another person who lived nearby who came and put the tire back on my car. I called those two men Good Samaritans.

Jesus is asked today, "And who is my neighbor?" Those two men did not know me, but they helped me. I was their neighbor that day. I was the recipient of their kindness, which reminded me that I must not ignore my neighbor in the future. Don't forget to be a good neighbor, because one day you might be the neighbor in need.

■ FR. EDWARD LOONEY

Exodus 1:8-14, 22 + Psalm 124:1-8 + Matthew 10:34—11:1

The Price of Peace

Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword.

MATTHEW 10:34

In the Beatitudes, Jesus blesses the peacemakers, calling them children of God. How then can he say he brings not peace but the sword? Isn't peace—the lack of war and the presence of harmony—a *good thing*?

We strive for spiritual peace, that state where our thoughts, actions and desires are in union with God. But spiritual peace doesn't always come easy in this world. As Jesus goes on to tell the Apostles in sending them forth, it can involve separating ourselves from those who don't put God first. Sometimes, that includes those we love most. We pray for them. We bring them the Good News in our words and the way we live. But make no mistake. Evil comes closer to grabbing our souls and destroying our spiritual peace when we go along to get along in the world.

Choose God. Choose the hope of eternal life.

Jesus, may I never be afraid to speak truth to those who threaten my spiritual peace.

TUESDAY, JULY 15

St. Bonaventure

Exodus 2:1-15a + Psalm 69:3, 14, 30-31, 33-34 + Matthew 11:20-24

Missing the Message

Woe to you, Bethsaida! MATTHEW 11:21

Jesus often visited the small fishing village of Bethsaida that borders the Sea of Galilee. It was the home of three Apostles: Peter, Andrew and Philip. (See John 1:44.) The citizens there met Jesus and witnessed his miracles of feeding the 5,000 nearby and the local man who was blind to whom Jesus gave sight. (See Mark 8:26.) We would think those townsfolk would have felt blessed and desired to learn more about Jesus and his teachings. But, with the Bethsaida crowd, Jesus was not impressed; instead, he offered them a sharp condemnation. Why? The people saw only the miracles but missed or ignored the message to reform their lives.

Now, today, wherever we live we can see inspiring miracles: the rising sun, the birth of a child or the boundless love of a faithful friend. We can see these daily miracles, but we don't want to miss the greater messages that we ought to have a deeper love and appreciation of God and neighbor.

■ FR. JAMES MCKARNS

*Fr. McKarns is a priest in the
Diocese of Youngstown, OH.*

Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12 + Psalm 103:1-4, 6-7 + Matthew 11:25-27

Led to Safety

...an angel of the LORD appeared... EXODUS 3:2

In a flash, the two cars collided. Both were badly damaged. One of the drivers, stunned by the impact, opened his door and stood like a statue in traffic. Witnesses drove on—except one young man who chose to put his own day on hold. He pulled his car over, led the driver to safety and called an ambulance. He also took the time to contact the driver's wife—me.

I raced to the emergency room not knowing what to expect, and I thanked God to learn everyone involved was okay. A police officer there told me the young man had seen the accident unfold and wanted to go on record with a witness statement. He didn't have to do that, but he did. He didn't have to help my husband, but he did. It seems to me angels come in all shapes and sizes. And he was ours that day.

■ GAIL GOLEAS

*Calling all prayer warriors! Add your intercessions to
prayer center at LivingFaith.com/prayer-center.*

THURSDAY, JULY 17
15th Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus 3:13-20 + Psalm 105:1, 5, 8-9, 24-27 + Matthew 11:28-30

Learning From Their Wisdom

...the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said: I am concerned about you... EXODUS 3:16

I've been leading and teaching my kids for decades to the point where they're frustrated with my turning everything into a "teaching moment." They're not the only ones who are frustrated. I've lived a long life. Why can't they trust my hard-earned wisdom that could save them from making my same mistakes? If only they were like Moses...

Moses listens to the voice of the Lord and carries out his commands. Some might argue that anyone would listen to a voice with power enough to speak from a burning bush. I'd like to think that Moses learned from the wisdom of his forefathers. If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob trusted God to lead them, Moses could too.

Once I frame it that way, the inevitable questions become: Have I learned from the wisdom of Moses? Do I trust God wholeheartedly to lead me?

■ CLAIRE MCGARRY

Claire McGarry is the author of Grace in Tension: Discover Peace with Martha and Mary. For more information visit ShiftingMyPerspective.com.

Exodus 11:10—12:14 + Psalm 116:12-13, 15-18 + Matthew 12:1-8

‘I Desire Mercy’

If you knew what this meant, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned these innocent men.

MATTHEW 12:7

The young priest asked the saintly old priest, “If you could live your priesthood over again, would you change anything?” Immediately the elderly man said, “Yes, I would be easier on people. I wouldn’t be so stingy with God’s mercy and forgiveness.”

Mercy is intrinsically wedded to forgiveness. Mercy does not deny that a wrong has been committed; mercy puts that wrong into the wider and deeper context of God’s generous love for us. It’s easier to extend mercy and forgiveness to others if we have experienced God’s mercy toward ourselves.

Writer George Eliot said, “When death comes, it is never our tenderness that we repent of, but our severity.” What has been the measure of my tenderness and forgiveness toward others lately?

God of Mercy and Forgiveness, help me to incarnate your mercy and tenderness with everyone I meet today.

■ SR. MELANNIE SVOBODA, S.N.D.

Exodus 12:37-42 + Psalm 136:1, 23-24, 10-15 + Matthew 12:14-21

The Breadth of God's Embrace

A crowd of mixed ancestry also went up with them...

EXODUS 12:38

After the epic drama between Moses and Pharaoh, the Lord was finally leading the children of Abraham to freedom. So inspiring was the Exodus that crowds of others—likely slaves and refugees themselves—fell in with the Israelites, setting forth on a journey to a new life. As I read this part of the Exodus account, I recall this word to Abraham, that “in your descendants all the nations of the earth will find blessing” (Genesis 22:18).

This episode foreshadows God's plan for salvation, providing an image of the Church as well. Peter, Paul and the other Apostles marvel that the victory of Jesus and new life in the Spirit are intended for Jews and Gentiles alike. This saving mystery continues today with God offering freedom and restoration to all peoples. When we are tempted to see others as outsiders, remember the breadth of God's embrace, and “Give thanks to the LORD, for...his mercy endures forever” (Psalm 136:1).

■ STEVE PABLE

SUNDAY, JULY 20
16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis 18:1-10a + Psalm 15:2-5 + Colossians 1:24-28 + Luke 10:38-42

The One Thing Necessary

...you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. LUKE 10:41-42

In this familiar scene of Martha welcoming and serving and Mary assuming a disciple's pose of sitting at Jesus' feet, can we temporarily set aside any judgment and focus instead on Jesus addressing these words to *us*?

Are we consumed by worry and frantic about the details of our day, or overwhelmed by the long-standing concerns we carry for ourselves and the people we love? Can we share all of that with the Holy One and give it over to the tender heart of God, trusting that the Divine will not abandon us but will instead walk beside us as we move into an unknown future?

And what is that one thing for us right now? More engaged prayer? Fence-mending with someone who has wounded us? Opening our heart to a neighbor in need?

Holy One, illumine my life so that I may truly see as you do.

■ SR. CHRIS KOELLHOFFER, I.H.M.

Exodus 14:5-18 + Exodus 15:1-6 + Matthew 12:38-42

‘Fear Not!’

Fear not! Stand your ground, and you will see the victory the LORD will win for you today. EXODUS 14:13

Honestly, it's hard to encounter this passage from Exodus without hearing Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner in “The Ten Commandments.” But it's worth trying to hear these words anew because these verses tell us something vital and urgent.

Feeling worried, anxious, afraid?

“Fear not,” Moses tells his people. “Stand your ground.”

This is where faith begins. With trust. Loyalty. Courage. The kind of courage that gives rise to heroes, saints and prophets. The kind of courage that helped the Israelites survive—and that led their descendants centuries later to profess their belief in Christ. The kind of courage we all need.

God keeps telling this to us, in one way or another throughout Scripture. “Be not afraid.” Are we listening? In times of uncertainty or doubt, remember the people who walked through the desert, stood by God and stood their ground. Fear not!

Two words made all the difference.

TUESDAY, JULY 22
St. Mary Magdalene

Song of Songs 3:1-4b or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Psalm 63:2-6, 8-9 + John 20:1-2, 11-18

Thirsting for God

...I found him whom my heart loves.

SONG OF SONGS 3:4B

When I was a child, I used to spend hours upon hours alone at the creek near my home. I have fond memories of fossil hunting, skipping stones barefoot in the water but mostly of talking out loud to God in that place. My soul thirsted to be there; it was the one place as a child I knew I could be just who I was—like the birds and the water and the stones—and I found God there.

Mary Magdalene, whose feast we celebrate today, found the one her soul loved. Jesus found her first and healed her; she in turn could not be separated from this love that was her restoration. She chose to answer the calling to a life of service, itinerancy and struggle, but it was a life lived for her beloved. What her soul thirsted for could only be slaked by the waters of life and love found in Christ.

Jesus, I thirst for you. Lead me to streams overflowing with your boundless love.

■ SARAH HART

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

St. Bridget

Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15 ✦ Psalm 78:18-19, 23-28 ✦ Matthew 13:1-9

The Bread of Angels

*He rained manna upon them for food
and gave them heavenly bread.*

*Man ate the bread of angels,
food he sent them in abundance. PSALM 78:24-25*

I first learned the phrase “bread of angels” by St. Thomas Aquinas, thanks to his thirteenth-century hymn-writing for the feast of *Corpus Christi*. His lyrical poetry about the Eucharist was later set to the music many of us may know as “*Panis Angelicus*.” It is a wonderful hymn to contemplate as we read today’s psalm, likely Thomas’ inspiration, and the Liturgy’s First Reading from Exodus about God’s provision of manna in the desert. Both texts offer marvelous lessons in the typology we find between the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. A saying, attributed to St. Augustine, describes it: “The New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.”

As we consider the Eucharist we receive at Mass through words and actions of Jesus, let us wonder and marvel at the expansiveness of God’s plan and provision for us in this heavenly food from time immemorial.

■ PAT GOHN

THURSDAY, JULY 24

St. Sharbel Makhlūf

Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20b + Daniel 3:52-56 + Matthew 13:10-17

Blessed Your Eyes and Ears

But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. MATTHEW 13:16

We do not have the gift or privilege to have Jesus, God Incarnate, walking in our midst—at least not in the same way as his contemporaries were able to follow him from town to town, hearing his teachings and witnessing his miracles. Thankfully, we do have the Holy Eucharist as Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. And we have the capacity to serve the Lord according to the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, which St. Sharbel Makhlūf, whose memorial we celebrate today, practiced abundantly.

During these summer months, and throughout the year, we should dedicate ourselves to seeing opportunities to serve the Kingdom of God and to hear Jesus' words in the Gospel. Let us keep our eyes and ears open!

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the opportunity to seek your holy will, following the example of St. Sharbel Makhlūf.

■ MR. JUSTIN MCCLAIN, O.P.

Justin McClain is a veteran Catholic educator, author and consultant. He and his family live in suburban Maryland, within the Archdiocese of Washington.

FRIDAY, JULY 25

St. James

2 Corinthians 4:7-15 + Psalm 126:1-6 + Matthew 20:20-28

Being Part of God's Story

We hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7

If you're like me, you may enjoy hearing stories about folks finding treasures: the search, the hope, the adventure, the surprise. In the stories, treasures are hidden in sturdy containers such as a solid metal box or a wooden chest, never a clay vessel. Such a fragile container might expose the treasure to the elements or cause it to fall into the wrong hands.

Why does God choose *us*, people who are so vulnerable to corruption, for God's most precious treasure?

Our Christian faith breaks apart worldly definitions of strength through contradiction. We gain more when we give more away. The strength of our faith is found in our acts of humility. When we reverence God's power, we open ourselves to being part of God's story: a story where our weakness can become a powerful offering, and our most precious possession could be like broken bread transformed into Christ.

■ SR. JULIA WALSH, F.S.P.A.

SATURDAY, JULY 26
Sts. Joachim and Anne

Exodus 24:3-8 + Psalm 50:1-2, 5-6, 14-15 + Matthew 13:24-30

Nurturing Good Seeds

Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from? MATTHEW 13:27

These are the questions that many parents and grandparents ask as they watch their offspring choose lives that do not include faith, church and sacraments. “Where did we go wrong?” we ask. “Where did all these weeds come from that are choking the faith we so carefully planted?”

It’s a hard truth that many faithful Catholics find themselves in this situation, for the planter of weeds is always at work in the same fields where the seeds of faith are planted. Perhaps our best response is to keep caring for the good seeds and young sprouts. We cannot force faith to grow in others, but we can continue to live our faith in ways that will one day lead them—when they need it most—to say, “I want what you have.”

Help me live the kind of faith and life that others will want for themselves, Lord. Let them see my joy.

■ STEVE GIVENS

SUNDAY, JULY 27
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis 18:20-32 + Psalm 138:1-3, 6-8
Colossians 2:12-14 + Luke 11:1-13

When Prayers Are Not Answered

And I tell you, ask and you will receive. LUKE 11:9

Today's Gospel tells us that if we ask, we will receive. But this is not the experience of many. People come to me frustrated that they have prayed many times, perhaps for years and without success, for the conversion of a child, to find a good spouse, for the healing of an illness, and nothing changes.

How is a priest to respond? First, I empathize with them. They are suffering, perhaps losing hope. They feel that God doesn't care. It is understandable.

But eventually I add that God is a loving Father who knows what is best for us and always provides this and more. After pouring out our hearts to God in humble prayer, we must trust. We trust that God hears us and has us in the palm of his hand.

Father, I know you love me and hear my cries. Give me the grace of placing all my trust in you.

■ MSGR. STEPHEN J. ROSSETTI

Exodus 32:15-24, 30-34 + Psalm 106:19-23 + Matthew 13:31-35

Seeds of Love

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.

MATTHEW 13:31-32

I love to hear the stories of the twists and turns that people's lives take. The answer to the question, "How did you end up here?" is always so interesting—a combination of plans, accidents, coincidences, acceptance, risk-taking and accepting responsibilities.

It's not that everything always works out or that we don't make mistakes or suffer.

It's simply that the good in our lives begins in ways that can't be planned or predicted and that, if we pay attention, grow from seeds that God is planting—right now.

Loving God, may I nurture the seeds of love you are sowing in my life.

■ AMY WELBORN

TUESDAY, JULY 29
Sts. Martha, Mary and Lazarus

Exodus 33:7-11; 34:5b-9, 28 + Psalm 103:6-13
John 11:19-27 or Luke 10:38-42

Anxiety, Faith and Martha

She said to him, “Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ...” JOHN 11:27

I wasn't diagnosed with anxiety until midlife. Before then, I just assumed everyone had a ticker tape of thoughts constantly racing through their minds. Like Martha, I was frequently worried about many things (Luke 10:38-42). Maybe that's why I've always loved Martha and often found myself defending her when others pointed out that she should've been more like her sister, Mary, paying attention to the “better part”—listening to Jesus. *Hey, we need Martha*, I argued, *to actually get stuff done!*

In today's readings, I find myself rooting for Martha once again. Look at her growth! Is her anxiousness completely wiped away? Probably not. Is she grieving the death of her beloved brother? Most certainly. And yet, look at Martha's unshakable faith.

Martha confidently proclaims, “Even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you” (v. 22). She gives anxious me hope. She should give you hope too.

■ KATE WICKER

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30

St. Peter Chrysologus

Exodus 34:29-35 + Psalm 99:5-7, 9 + Matthew 13:44-46

Hidden Treasures

...all that he has... MATTHEW 13:44

Maybe we can be excused for not taking the parables too literally. After all, they're just stories, right? But they are Jesus' preferred form of teaching, so maybe they should be taken *more* seriously. When Jesus says a man "sells all that he has" to buy a field with a hidden treasure, or a merchant "sells all that he has" to buy a pearl of great price, why don't I do that to possess the Kingdom of heaven?

The Gospel reading is very short today. But how long does it have to be before I notice it and act on it? Did anyone in Jesus' original audience respond that very day and make so sweeping a change in their life? Probably not. After all, we all can find some excuse.

But you know who didn't look for an excuse? Jesus! He "sold" all that he had—his very life—emptying himself to possess us, the treasure, the pearl he would not live without!

■ MIGUEL DULICK

*Check out the hidden gems you'll find at the
Living Faith Extra blog. Go to
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THURSDAY, JULY 31
St. Ignatius of Loyola

Exodus 40:16-21, 34-38 + Psalm 84:3-6, 8, 11 + Matthew 13:47-53

Being Discerning People

The Kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea...

MATTHEW 13:47

I have never gone fishing or used a fishing net. However, I imagine that casting a net into the sea captures both the intended catch and unexpected surprises. Just as a fishing net could be full of surprises, embracing a broader perspective or venturing beyond our comfort zones could also come with the risk of encountering discomfort or negativity.

Our individual lives are shaped by taking inventory of all we gather to ourselves. We distinguish between what contributes positively to our lives and what detracts or draws us away from God. The sorting process is ongoing and requires intentionality and openness. As we navigate our own sea of choices, may we embody the spirit of St. Ignatius, casting our nets mindfully and being discerning people as we sift through all we experience in collaboration with God.

Loving God, help us discern and surrender as we cast our net to find opportunities for growth and discovery.

■ VIVIAN AMU

Prayers & Blessings

Morning Prayers

Father in heaven, draw me near to you today. You are my origin and my true destination. Thank you for making me your beloved child with a home in your family. I greet this day with the knowledge that you love me. May I be led by your divine Providence every hour, and every moment, confidently trusting in your love today. **AMEN.**

Good morning, Jesus! You are the way, truth and life. Your way is the perfect path for my day. Your truth is all I need to know. Your life offers me salvation and the promise of heaven. May I make my life a gift to you and to the people you invite me to serve today. Help me to avoid temptations and walk in virtue, guided by your Presence. **AMEN.**

Come, Holy Spirit, shine your light on me in the morning. Help me to rise and give glory to God. Then, send your help so that I may serve God with joy by loving and serving others this day. Let my smile be your radiance. Let my words be your kindness. May my actions reflect your goodness. **AMEN.**

Prayers & Blessings

Evening Prayers

Father in heaven, I come to take my rest. You saw everything about my day today. Allow me to lay it all before you. You know my strivings, my good actions and my failings. Help me to grow and learn from my mistakes and give you the glory for what went right. Send me your peace and restore me by sleep to wake and serve you anew tomorrow. **AMEN.**

Jesus, Lord of the Day and the Night, I come to you with all that is in my heart. As evening comes, I seek your blessing and help: to reflect on the day and bring to light what was profitable for my growth and those moments that hindered it. Help me to release any worries to your care and sleep in peace. **AMEN.**

Holy Spirit, you are my silent Advocate. Thank you for working in my day. Watch over all my loved ones and all the situations that I bring to you now. Inspire in me the desire to be renewed in love and grace, and to live for Christ more fully, as I look forward to the hope of a new day and the beauty of the life to come. **AMEN.**

Prayers & Blessings

For Families

St. Maximilian Kolbe, you gave your life so that a family might not be deprived of a husband and father. By your heroic martyrdom of charity, teach us that the value of family life is worth our sacrifices also. Just as you found in Mary the channel of those graces that strengthened you to be faithful to her Son, help us to rejoice also in her who was given to us as a mother by Jesus from the Cross. Be with us, St. Maximilian, as we pray for the special needs of our family [insert petitions here]. **AMEN.**

Lord, Take Me...

Lord, take me where you want me to go; let me meet who you want me to meet; tell me what you want me to say; and keep me out of your way. **AMEN.**

FR. MYCHAL JUDGE, FDNY, who died 9/11/01

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Prayer Prompt

Make a Spiritual Pilgrimage

Making a pilgrimage is a time-honored spiritual practice. During this Jubilee, many Catholics are embarking to Rome to pray, reflect and seek God's will in their lives by visiting the famous basilicas and other religious sites. Well-known pilgrimage sites include Jerusalem and the Holy Lands, walking the Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James) in Spain and Marian shrines such as Guadalupe in Mexico, Fatima in Portugal or Lourdes in France.

A pilgrimage is more than a vacation or tour. Here's why!

A pilgrimage brings spiritual benefits. Begin with the end in mind: How might your pilgrimage bring you closer to God? Think of it as a specialized retreat, an opportunity to come away and encounter God and his love. It's also a time to share your faith and experiences with fellow pilgrims.

Discover what opportunities for the sacraments might be available not only at your destination but also along the way. Look for opportunities for prayer and penitence: go to confession, attend Mass, make sacrifices and pray in unique and sacred spaces as you make the journey.

A pilgrimage opens our minds and hearts to learning.

Maybe the site or location has biblical significance, like the Holy Lands being where Jesus walked the earth. Or perhaps the site is a shrine or basilica dedicated to a special event in history or a particular saint, like St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, or the Shrine of the North American Martyrs in New York or one the missions founded by St. Junípero Serra in California? Learning about our heroes in faith—the communion of saints—and the places they lived and traveled offers inspiration for our own lives.

A pilgrimage offers discernment and reflection. It can offer the time and space to ask God about some of our big questions. And to seek what God might be asking of us. Walking a pilgrimage path invites us to grasp hold of priorities and release things we no longer need to carry.

A pilgrimage can be long or short, far away or local. See what your means and state in life allows. Travel to a different country might be worthwhile, but the cost of such may take years to save for. In the meantime, ask God to point you in the direction of local destinations. There are hundreds of potential shrines and churches in the U.S. that would be good pilgrimage destinations for a weekend or a day trip.

*Did you know that Living Faith now sponsors pilgrimages?
Visit LivingFaith.com/pilgrimages.*



'You are a sign of Christ's nearness to those in need of hope'

When Pope Francis addressed a group of prison chaplains, he asked them to let prisoners know that he prays for them. The Holy Father went on to remind chaplains that they "are a sign of Christ's nearness to [those]...in need of hope."



We encourage you, too, to pray for incarcerated women and men. The *Living Faith* Foundation also aids: Families in Need and Military Personnel. By supporting the work of the *Living Faith* Foundation, you will also be "a sign of Christ's nearness" to those in need.



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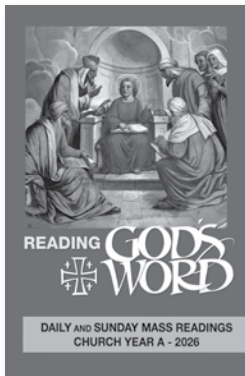
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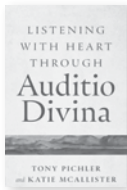


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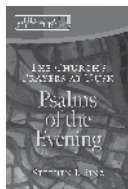
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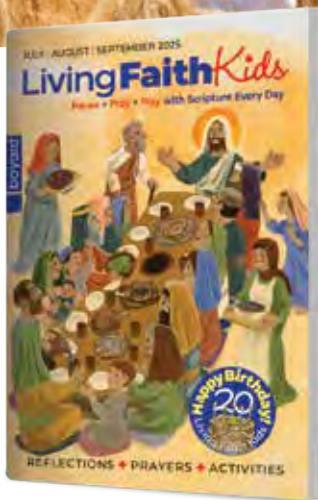
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