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**What is the Anawim Spirituality?**

Our spirituality has three essential characteristics:

**Liturgical**

The Liturgy is the source of our formation. Daily, we draw inspiration from the readings and prayers of the Liturgy, which we understand to be the ponderings of Mary’s heart. For this reason, we honor Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Liturgical Life.

**Eucharistic**

Jesus in the Eucharist is the center of our spirituality. By faithful participation in Holy Mass and frequent Eucharistic Adoration, we are empowered by the Presence of Jesus to go forth to serve the people of God in all the circumstances of life.

**Marian**

We entrust ourselves to Mary, the mother and model of every Christian. She continually forms us in her spirit of humility, compassion and reconciling love, transforming us into the likeness of Jesus. She shares with us her spiritual motherhood as we are called to bring forth the life of Jesus in others.

*If you would like to explore the Anawim Community further, or if you feel called to the priesthood, we invite you to contact us.*
Pentecost Sunday
and
Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

“Peace be with you…
Receive the Holy Spirit.”
John 20:21, 22

Theme for the Week
The Gift of God, the Holy Spirit, poured into our hearts at Baptism, never ceases to do his greatest work, transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. With gratitude to God, let us open our hearts each day to his extraordinary Gift, so that the work of the Spirit may come to its fullness.
The Easter Season that we are living joyfully, guided by the Church’s liturgy, is *par excellence* the season of the Holy Spirit given “without measure” (cf. Jn 3:34) by Jesus Crucified and Risen. This time of grace closes with the Feast of Pentecost, in which the Church relives the outpouring of the Spirit upon Mary and the Apostles gathered in prayer in the Upper Room.

But who is the Holy Spirit? In the Creed we profess with faith: “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life.” The first truth to which we adhere in the Creed is that the Holy Spirit is *Kýrios*, Lord. This signifies that he is truly God just as the Father and the Son; the object, on our part, of the same act of adoration and glorification that we address to the Father and to the Son. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity; he is the great gift of Christ Risen who opens our mind and our heart to faith in Jesus as the Son sent by the Father and who leads us to friendship, to communion with God.

However, I would like to focus especially on the fact that the *Holy Spirit is the inexhaustible source of God’s life in us*. Man of every time and place desires a full and beautiful life, just and good, a life that is not threatened by death, but can still mature and grow to fullness. Man is like a traveler who, crossing the deserts of life, thirsts for the living water: gushing and fresh, capable of quenching his deep desire for light, love, beauty and peace. We all feel this desire! And Jesus gives us this living water: he is the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and whom Jesus pours out into our hearts. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly,” Jesus tells us (Jn 10:10).

Jesus promised the Samaritan woman that he will give a superabundance of “living water” forever to all those who recognize him as the Son sent by the Father to save us (cf. Jn 4:5-26; 3:17). Jesus came to give us this “living water,” who is the Holy Spirit, that our life might be guided by God, might be moved by God, nourished by God. When we say that a Christian is a spiritual being we mean just this: the Christian is a person who thinks and acts in accordance with God, in
accordance with the Holy Spirit. But I ask myself: and do we, do we think in accordance with God? Do we act in accordance with God? Or do we let ourselves be guided by the many other things that certainly do not come from God? Each one of us needs to respond to this in the depths of his or her own heart.

At this point we may ask ourselves: why can this water quench our thirst deep down? We know that water is essential to life; without water we die; it quenches, washes, makes the earth fertile. In the Letter to the Romans we find these words: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (5:5). The “living water,” the Holy Spirit, the Gift of the Risen One who dwells in us, purifies us, illuminates us, renews us, transforms us, because he makes us participants in the very life of God that is Love. That is why the Apostle Paul says that the Christian’s life is moved by the Holy Spirit and by his fruit, which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit introduces us to divine life as “children in the Only Begotten Son.”

In another passage from the Letter to the Romans, that we have recalled several times, St. Paul sums it up with these words: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you... have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (8:14-17). This is the precious gift that the Holy Spirit brings to our hearts: the very life of God, the life of true children, a relationship of confidence, freedom and trust in the love and mercy of God. It also gives us a new perception of others, close and far, seen always as brothers and sisters in Jesus to be respected and loved.

The Holy Spirit teaches us to see with the eyes of Christ, to live life as Christ lived, to understand life as Christ understood it. That is why the living water, who is the Holy Spirit, quenches our life, why he tells us that we are loved by God as children, that we can love God as his children and that by his grace we can live as children of God, like Jesus. And we, do we listen to the Holy Spirit? What does the Holy Spirit tell
us? He says: God loves you. He tells us this. God loves you, God likes you. Do we truly love God and others, as Jesus does? Let us allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit; let us allow him to speak to our heart and say this to us: God is love, God is waiting for us, God is Father, he loves us as a true father loves, he loves us truly and only the Holy Spirit can tell us this in our hearts. Let us hear the Holy Spirit; let us listen to the Holy Spirit and may we move forward on this path of love, mercy and forgiveness. Thank you.

Pope Francis, General Audience, May 8, 2013
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May 31, Pentecost Sunday

**Vigil Mass:** Gen 11:1-9 or Ex 19:3-8a, 16-20b or Ez 37:1-14 or Jl 3:1-5; Ps 104:1-24, 35, 27-28, 29, 30; Rom 8:22-27; Jn 7:37-39

**Extended Vigil:** Gen 11:1-9; Ps 33:10-15 / Ex 19:3-8, 16-20; Dn 3:52-56 / Ez 37:1-14; Ps 107:2-9 / Jl 3:1-5; Ps 104:1-2, 24, and 35, 27-28, 29-30; Rom 8:22-27; Jn 7:37-39

**First Reading:** Acts 2:1-11

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

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

or Alleluia.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!

How manifold are your works, O LORD!

the earth is full of your creatures.

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

or Alleluia.

If you take away their breath, they perish and return to their dust.

When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

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

or Alleluia.
May the glory of the LORD endure forever;  
may the LORD be glad in his works!

Pleasing to him be my theme;  
I will be glad in the LORD.

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

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

Brothers and sisters: No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Sequence: Veni, Sancte Spiritus

Come, Holy Spirit, come!  
And from your celestial home  
Shed a ray of light divine!

Come, Father of the poor!  
Come, source of all our store!  
Come, within our bosoms shine.

You, of comforters the best;  
You, the soul’s most welcome guest;  
Sweet refreshment here below;

In our labor, rest most sweet;  
Grateful coolness in the heat;  
Solace in the midst of woe.

O most blessed Light divine,  
Shine within these hearts of yours,  
And our inmost being fill!
Where you are not, we have naught,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill.

Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:

Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

On the faithful, who adore
And confess you, evermore
In your sevenfold gift descend;

Give them virtue’s sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
Give them joys that never end. Amen.
Alleluia.

**Gospel Acclamation:**
*Alleluia, alleluia.* Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. *Alleluia, alleluia.*

**Gospel: John 20:19-23**

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

**Meditation:**

If we were asked to say what is our ultimate goal in life, we might answer that it is to get to Heaven. And if we were asked further what Heaven will be like, we might say that we will be with God, enjoying eternal happiness in his presence. In the meantime, as we live our life here on earth, this final goal can seem very distant, having little
connection with our day-to-day experience. We can sometimes act as if we have one life now, and we will have another life “someday” in Heaven, but we seldom think about how the transition will occur between “this life” and the “next life.” If we think of this at all, we tend to suppose that, when we die, we will leave this life and begin the next one, and let it go at that.

In this week’s Spiritual Reflection, however, Pope Francis introduces us to quite a different way of thinking about this. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, he says, “He makes us participants in the very life of God that is Love…. The Holy Spirit introduces us to divine life as ‘children in the Only Begotten Son.’” What he is saying is that the life of union with God, which we rightly look forward to in Heaven, begins now, here on earth! We do not need to wait until our death to begin sharing life with God; we can enter into this life now, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Pope assures us that just as Christ remained totally united with his Father while he lived his earthly life, we too can enter into the experience of living united with God: “The Holy Spirit teaches us to see with the eyes of Christ, to live life as Christ lived, to understand life as Christ understood it.”

The reason that living in union with God can seem very far from our normal experience of life is that we know our weakness and sinfulness. It can seem impossible to us that, poor and limited as we are, we could truly enter into Jesus’ experience of union with the Father in our daily life. God is so holy, so exalted, and we are so lowly and sinful. We do have the hope of being united with him one day, in Heaven. But how can this happen now? The good news, of course, is that it is not something that we have to accomplish by our own efforts, for that would be impossible. It is something which God does in us, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We can see an example of how this works in the first reading. The disciples were hidden away in the Upper Room, waiting in prayer with Mary. They were in no condition to accomplish the mission which Jesus gave them in the Gospel, when he told them, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” They were afraid even to show their faces in public. How could they be expected to carry on Jesus’ mission in the world? But then the Holy Spirit descended on them and filled them. They immediately went out and began to proclaim Jesus to a large crowd of people. They
were even able to speak many different languages. This is clearly not something they did on their own; it happened because they were open to the power of the Holy Spirit working in them.

Now the Church is called to carry on the same mission – to proclaim Jesus to everyone in the world, speaking to people’s hearts in a way that all can understand. We are members of this Church, and we are called to this mission. This is the life of God – to give oneself completely in love and to draw others to share in that love. It is the Holy Spirit who lives the very life of God within us, making us sharers in that life by his grace and power, thus making us children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

If we know our littleness and poverty, our desperate need for God’s grace to lift us up, then we can rejoice that this is exactly what the Holy Spirit comes to do for us! Let us read through the Sequence for today, slowly and carefully. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit? He is the Father of the poor, the best Comforter, sweet rest in our labor, coolness in the heat, light in our darkness, healing for our wounds, softener of our hard hearts, a giver of gifts and joys which never end. No wonder we cry out to him, “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.”

Let us stir in our hearts a longing to enter more deeply into the life of God, and let us cry out to the Holy Spirit to do this great transforming work in us. *Come, Holy Spirit, come!*

Do I understand and believe that the life of union with God begins now, here on earth? Am I open to the working of the Spirit in me, putting aside fears of my sinfulness and weakness? Is my life one of giving myself completely in love to draw others to share in this love?

*Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, assist me to be open to the Spirit in my daily life.*
SEASONAL INTRODUCTION TO
ORDINARY TIME AFTER PENTECOST

Note: The Easter Season concludes with Pentecost Sunday. From the upper room, the Church goes forth empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the life she has within her. Now we enter the period of Ordinary Time, which concludes on Saturday following the feast of Christ the King.

Before we move into a new season, with its broad thrust through the remaining weeks of the year, it is good to review the events that have brought us to this point. We recall that the new liturgical year began with the First Sunday of Advent, December 1, 2019. Advent led into the Christmas Season, which continued through the Baptism of the Lord, January 12, 2020. January 13 was the start of Ordinary Time, which lasted until the day before Ash Wednesday, February 26 this year. The Season of Lent followed, preparing us for the great Easter Triduum: from Holy Thursday evening, through Good Friday and Holy Saturday, up to Easter Sunday. With the solemn Easter Vigil on the night of April 11, we saw the first dawning of the “Fifty Days” of Easter. This gives us an overview of what we have celebrated in the life of the Church thus far.

This Sunday, May 31, we celebrated the Solemnity of Pentecost. Monday, June 1, begins the period of Ordinary Time after Pentecost. Now that we have been brought to a certain corporate maturity in the growth of the Body of Christ, we are called to proclaim this fullness of life to the whole world. It is through the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord that we have been given the fullness of the Spirit, which fills us with an ardor to go forth as Jesus charged the Apostles to do when he ascended to his Father. The period of Ordinary Time after Pentecost ends on November 28, the Saturday following the Solemnity of Christ the King, and a new liturgical year begins with the First Sunday of Advent, November 29.

The period of the liturgical year that is now before us represents in a symbolic way the period of time before the end of the world, whenever that will be. All of creation is waiting in expectation for all that is to be fulfilled. The thrust of this Season is reconciliation: the
restoration of all things in Christ – a total restoration of creation itself. Finally, all creation must be filled with the one life of God to realize the glory that is to be revealed. This becomes our commission, our labor, our life.

Meanwhile, we must see ourselves here on earth as one body of Christ: we must maintain our unity. That gives us the thrust of the Church and our commission, as we stand at the edge of this new liturgical season. We operate out of this awareness to maintain the integrity of our faith and proclaim this unique restoration.

Several feasts central to the Church are celebrated during the first weeks of Ordinary Time in order to prepare us once more for what lies ahead. Pentecost is followed by the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity (June 7) and the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (June 14). Friday, June 19, is the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Saturday, June 20, is the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This exceptional combination of feasts immediately gives to the liturgy a sense of very deep mystery.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary also gives us the invaluable awareness of being nurtured in the “womb” of Mother Church. As we ponder the word of the liturgy, Mary directs us into the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

Adapted from the writings of Fr. Francis J. Marino, Founder of the Anawim Community
**June 1, Monday, 9th Week in Ordinary Time**  
The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church

*Readings for the Day: 2 Pt 1:2-7; Ps 87:1-3, 5-7; Mk 12:1-12*

**First Reading: Genesis 3:9-15, 20**

After the man, Adam, had eaten of the tree, the Lord God called to the man and asked him, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.” Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat?” The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me– she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.” The Lord God then asked the woman, “Why did you do such a thing?” The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.”

Then the Lord God said to the serpent:

“Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; On your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.”

The man called his wife Eve, because she became the mother of all the living.

or *Acts 1:12-14*

After Jesus had been taken up into heaven, the Apostles returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away.

When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.
**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 87:1b-3,5,6-7**

_Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!_

His foundation upon the holy mountains  
the LORD loves:  
The gates of Zion,  
more than any dwelling of Jacob.  

**R. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!**

Glorious things are said of you,  
O city of God!  
And of Zion they shall say:  
“One and all were born in her;  
And he who has established her  
is the Most High LORD.”

**R. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!**

They shall note, when the peoples are enrolled:  
“This man was born there.”  
And all shall sing, in their festive dance:  
“My home is within you.”

**R. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!**

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**Gospel Acclamation:**

_Alleluia, alleluia._ O happy Virgin, you gave birth to the Lord; O blessed mother of the Church, you warm our hearts with the Spirit of your Son Jesus Christ. _Alleluia, alleluia._

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**Gospel: John 19:25-34**

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and that they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first
and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately Blood and water flowed out.

**Meditation:**

We are presented today with two mothers, each of whom stood at the foot of a “tree” and listened to a “word,” which had profound consequences for her children.

The first reading takes us back to the story of Adam and Eve’s fall from grace. Eve was standing at the foot of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the fruit of which God had commanded her and Adam not to eat. She listened to the word of the serpent, who told her that she could not trust God. He urged her to take matters into her own hands and eat the forbidden fruit, in an effort to make herself like God. In effect, he told her that she could take God’s place.

We know the terrible “fruit” of Eve’s choice to listen to and act upon this word of the serpent – sin entered into the world. She broke her relationship with God, and convinced Adam to do the same. They lost their close friendship and communion with God. And they necessarily passed on to their descendants the consequences of their sin. And so we who are “children of Eve” by nature are born into this world with Original Sin, tending to fear and distrust God rather than love and trust him.

In today’s Gospel we see the other mother, Mary, standing at the foot of the “tree” of the Cross, upon which her Son is dying in order to bring reconciliation between God and humanity. She too is listening to a “word,” but this time it is the word of God which she treasures in her heart. She hears Jesus say from the Cross, “Woman, behold your son,” and she hears the Holy Spirit tell her that her Son is giving his life in love to glorify the Father and to win salvation for all people. He is telling her to be united to her Son in his mission, giving her full “yes” to God even in this most awful trial, as her soul is pierced with sorrow (cf. Lk 2:35). And she chooses to listen to and act upon this word.

As Eve’s “no” to God had consequences for all of her descendants, so Mary’s “yes” to God bears immense fruit for her children. We saw in yesterday’s celebration of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit lives within
our hearts, introducing us into the very life of God. But in order for us to enter into that divine life, we have to make a choice to say “yes” to God, “yes” to his action in us. This is where Mary acts as our Mother. As she always said a full and unreserved “yes” to God at every moment of her life, she gains for us the grace to do the same. Because of her obedience, we have “inherited” from her, in the order of grace, the ability to make the same choice as she did.

Our Gospel Acclamation for today is, “Happy are you, holy Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise, for from you arose the sun of justice, Christ our God.” It is Mary who, in her womb, put flesh on the very Word of God. In her, that Word became incarnate. This is her role for all time, to help to “put flesh on the word.” Now she does this in us. As our Mother, she helps us to say “yes” to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit as he makes Christ present once again in the world in our own flesh.

This is what it means for Mary to be “Mother of the Church.” What is the Church, except the very Body of Christ on earth? That Body is made up of us, who are being transformed, like the Eucharist, from ordinary “bread” into the very Body and Blood of Christ.

This is a process of deepest mystery. We can only fully become the Body of Christ as we allow the power of the Holy Spirit to work in us. We need to enter into prayer, as the Apostles did in the alternate first reading. They “went into the upper room” where they “devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with … Mary the mother of Jesus.” Like them, we need to take the time to retire to our own “upper room” – someplace where we can be quiet and undisturbed, to spend time with God. We ask Mary to be with us and to give us the grace to say our own “yes” with her to all that God means to do in us, to make us her children, true members of his Church, his Body on earth. Then we are no longer imprisoned in the disobedience of Eve, for we have died with Christ to that natural life and are now free to live a new life of grace as children of Mary.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives his Mother to us to be our Mother. Let us listen deeply today as he says to us, “Behold, your Mother.” And, like John, let us then take Mary into our home, our heart. The Jerusalem Bible translates the end of this sentence as “the disciple made a place for her in his home.” Let us make a place for Mary in our lives, asking her
to stay with us as our spiritual Mother and to teach us always to say our “yes” with her to God.

As I stand at the foot of a “tree” listening to a “word,” am I drawn to imitate Eve or Mary? Do I humbly ask Mary to help me “put flesh on the word”? Do I take time to retire with Mary to my “upper room” to spend time with God daily?

Mary, I beg you to be my spiritual Mother and to teach me to always say “yes” to God.

In 2018, Pope Francis proclaimed an additional feast in honor of Mary: The Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. This newest feast on the Church’s universal liturgical calendar is to be celebrated each year on the Monday after Pentecost, thereby highlighting the connection between Pentecost as the “birthday of the Church” and Mary through whom the Church is born. Mary’s maternal role was revealed when Jesus from the Cross said to the beloved disciple, “Behold your Mother.” Her mission was manifest in the Upper Room as she prayed with the Apostles in the days of preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Mary is thus fittingly honored as the spiritual Mother of all who are saved by death and resurrection of Christ and who are filled with his Spirit. The title “Mother of the Church” was officially established in a decree of St. Pope Paul VI at the end of the Second Vatican Council (November 21, 1964).

Notes
First Reading: 2 Peter 3:12-15a, 17-18
Beloved: Wait for and hasten the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire. But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace. And consider the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, be on your guard not to be led into the error of the unprincipled and to fall from your own stability. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 90:2, 3-4, 10, 14 and 16
In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge.
Before the mountains were begotten
and the earth and the world were brought forth,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
R. In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge.
You turn man back to dust,
saying, “Return, O children of men.”
For a thousand years in your sight
are as yesterday, now that it is past,
or as a watch of the night.
R. In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge.
Seventy is the sum of our years,
or eighty, if we are strong,
And most of them are fruitless toil,
for they pass quickly and we drift away.
R. In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge.
Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,
that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.
Let your work be seen by your servants
and your glory by their children.
R. In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge.
Gospel Acclamation: see Ephesians 1:17-18

Alleluia, alleluia. May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we may know what is the hope that belongs to his call. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel: Mark 12:13-17

Some Pharisees and Herodians were sent to Jesus to ensnare him in his speech. They came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you are not concerned with anyone’s opinion. You do not regard a person’s status but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or should we not pay?” Knowing their hypocrisy he said to them, “Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at.” They brought one to him and he said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They replied to him, “Caesar’s.” So Jesus said to them, “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” They were utterly amazed at him.

Meditation:

We saw on Pentecost Sunday that the Holy Spirit is at work in us, inviting us into the very life of God! And we celebrated yesterday the memorial of Mary, Mother of the Church, who, as our Mother, helps us to give our full “yes” to the work of the Spirit in us. We also saw yesterday, however, that the serpent is always trying to trick us into turning away from God and putting ourselves in his place. Today’s readings speak to us about these two “voices” which compete for our attention and allegiance.

St. Peter reminds us in the first reading that we are awaiting “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” We are not to be caught up in chasing power and glory in this world, for it is destined to pass away: “the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire.” We should be on our guard against the deception of the evil one, who tells us that we should seek comfort and fulfillment in the things of this world. Peter tells us that this is “the error of the unprincipled.” On our part, we should rather be concerned with growing “in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.”

We saw yesterday that Eve was tricked by the serpent into making the “error of the unprincipled.” Contrary to the serpent’s lie to her, eating the forbidden fruit did not make her “like God.” Quite the
opposite – it interfered with her likeness to God and her communion with him. We also saw that, if we take Mary as our Mother, she can help us be reconciled to God. Like her, we can be made “without spot or blemish before him, at peace” – at peace with God.

The serpent is very clever, and he has many ways to try to trick us and turn us away from God. We can see his influence at work in today’s Gospel, in which the Pharisees and Herodians are trying to trip up Jesus in his speech. These men have studied the word of God. Most likely they began their studies with the best of intentions, wanting to know God’s ways so that they could follow him and do what is right and good. But the demon has gradually fanned the flames of pride in their hearts. As they have learned more, they have grown proud and convinced of their own righteousness. Finally, they have ended up in a condition of hypocrisy, where they are pretending to seek truth but are actually trying to trap and humiliate Jesus. He knows their hypocrisy, so he asks them, “Why are you testing me?”

We do well to examine our own hearts, to see if we have given the lie of the serpent any room to grow within us. Are we truly and humbly seeking to know God’s ways and his will in our lives? Are we open to hearing him speak, even through people whom we might not expect him to work through? Or have we grown self-assured to the point where we are instead seeking to test and trip up others who challenge us? If so, we are falling into the “error of the unprincipled.”

Jesus gives us a powerful lesson when he asks whose image is on the coin. It is the image of Caesar, and so Caesar has a claim on the coin. “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.” However, the deeper question is whose image do we bear in our hearts? If we are guided by the voice of the Holy Spirit, with Mary as our Mother, then the image of Christ is becoming clearer and clearer in us, and he claims us as his own. But if we are allowing ourselves to be tricked by the voice of the serpent, then it is his image which is being imprinted on our hearts, and he is making his claim on us.

In our poverty and brokenness, it can be very difficult for us to discern at times how we are being tricked and how we are truly following the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we pray with the Gospel Acclamation for today, “May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we may know what is the hope that
belongs to his call.” Yes, Lord, enlighten our hearts that we might always know your will, and be docile to the workings of your Holy Spirit in us!

Am I open to the Spirit as he shows me how clever the devil is to trick me to turn away from God? Am I truly and humbly seeking to know God’s ways and his will in my life? Is my concern in life to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ?

Mary, guide me that I might always know God’s will and be docile to the working of the Spirit in my life.
Sts. Marcellinus and Peter, pray for us.

Little is known of these two holy men, Marcellinus, a priest, and Peter an exorcist. Both were beheaded under Diocletian around 304 or 305. Pope Damasus wrote a beautiful inscription in the catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter, stating that they demonstrated edifying serenity in the face of death. Both are mentioned in the Roman Canon.

Notes
First Reading: 2 Timothy 1:1-3, 6-12

Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God for the promise of life in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dear child: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am grateful to God, whom I worship with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, as I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day.

For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God.

He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, for which I was appointed preacher and Apostle and teacher. On this account I am suffering these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know him in whom I have believed and am confident that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 123:1b-2ab, 2cdef

To you, O Lord, I lift up my eyes.

To you I lift up my eyes
who are enthroned in heaven.
Behold, as the eyes of servants
are on the hands of their masters.
R. To you, O Lord, I lift up my eyes.

As the eyes of a maid
are on the hands of her mistress,
So are our eyes on the LORD, our God,
till he have pity on us.
R. To you, O Lord, I lift up my eyes.

Gospel Acclamation: John 11:25a, 26

Alleluia, alleluia. I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord; whoever believes in me will never die. Alleluia, alleluia.
Gospel: Mark 12:18-27
Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus and put this question to him, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us, If someone’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first married a woman and died, leaving no descendants. So the second brother married her and died, leaving no descendants, and the third likewise. And the seven left no descendants. Last of all the woman also died. At the resurrection when they arise whose wife will she be? For all seven had been married to her.” Jesus said to them, “Are you not misled because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven. As for the dead being raised, have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God told him, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not God of the dead but of the living. You are greatly misled.”

Meditation:
We began this week by praying, on the day of Pentecost, the ancient prayer of the Church, “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.” We see immediately from this prayer that we are in the position of asking the Holy Spirit to come to us. This is an attitude of humility. We do not have the Spirit as if he were our own possession, or ours by right. We have no claim upon him, that we might demand his coming to us. No, we ask, we implore. We await his coming to us as a free gift of his love.

And we must ask because we are in need. The Sequence on Sunday included this stanza: “Where you are not, we have naught, / nothing good in deed or thought, / nothing free from taint of ill.” We need the Holy Spirit to come to us, for without him we have no hope of divine life. Without him we are imprisoned in the sin of our first parents, estranged from God’s friendship. Without him we cannot enter into the reconciliation gained for us by Christ. We desperately need the Holy Spirit!

And so, in this first week after Pentecost, we do well to begin with an attitude of deepest humility. Today’s Psalm teaches us what this looks like: “To you, O Lord, I lift up my eyes. To you I lift up my eyes who are enthroned in heaven. Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters. As the eyes of a maid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes on the LORD, our God, till he have pity on us.”
In biblical times, the eyes of a servant would have been carefully watching the master, ready to move immediately with the slightest indication from him. Woe to the servant who let his attention wander from the master, and instead got caught up in thinking about his own plans. He would certainly not have done well for himself if he continued to ignore his master’s promptings.

Just like an inattentive servant, we can get so caught up in our own thoughts and our way of seeing the world that we forget to listen for our master’s voice. Worse yet, we can gradually come to believe that we are the masters of our own lives! Then we stop even trying to discern the ways of God and become lost in our own self-righteousness, sure that we already know the truth and have no more need to seek it. This is what has happened to the Sadducees in the Gospel. They think they have come up with a clever trap for Jesus, asking him about a woman who married seven brothers in a row. Jesus, seeing through their error, tells them that they have been misled because they “do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”

In the first reading, St. Paul tells Timothy, “Stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.” When Paul imposed his hands on Timothy, he called down the Holy Spirit upon him. Thus the “tongues as of fire” which came down upon the Apostles when they were filled with the Holy Spirit also came down upon Timothy. In our Baptism and Confirmation, we too have had the Spirit come down upon us by the imposition of hands. So we can take Paul’s exhortation to heart and hear him telling us also to “stir into flame the gift of God” which we have received.

If we are being urged to stir our gift into flame, this can indicate to us that perhaps we have allowed the fire of the Holy Spirit to die down in our hearts. Perhaps it is only like a small, “smoldering wick,” as we read about in Isaiah 42:3. Paul tells Timothy that “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice.” This also gives us a clue about how we might have allowed the gift of the Spirit to die down in us. We might have taken our eyes off of Christ and become too intimidated by the seeming power of the world. In a “spirit of cowardice” we might be fearful of what it will cost to bear witness to Christ in these times. So Paul urges us, “do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord… but bear your share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God.”
If we keep our eyes fixed on Christ, then we will not be ruled by fear. Paul assures us that God “saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus.” It is his grace. It is his design. It is his Holy Spirit which he freely gives to all who ask. Therefore we can say with Paul, “I am not ashamed, for I know him in whom I have believed and am confident that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.”

Do I see my need to call upon the Spirit for without him I have no hope of divine life? As the eyes of a maid are always on her master, are my eyes always on the Lord till he has pity on me? Have I allowed the fire of the Holy Spirit to die down in my heart? How can I enkindle it again?

Mary, help me to bear the hardships of the Gospel with the strength that comes from God. Sts. Charles Lwanga and companions, pray for us.

The twenty-two Ugandan martyrs, the first martyrs of black Africa, were pages at the court of King Mwanga. Charles Lwanga was the chief of the royal pages. He became the moral leader of the others, instructing them in the Catholic Faith and inspiring them to remain faithful and chaste. These courageous young men who resisted the homosexual demands of the king were tortured and finally executed during the period from November 15, 1885 to January 27, 1887.

Notes
First Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8-15
Beloved: Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David: such is my Gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory. This saying is trustworthy:

If we have died with him
   we shall also live with him;
if we persevere
   we shall also reign with him.
But if we deny him
   he will deny us.
If we are unfaithful
   he remains faithful,
   for he cannot deny himself.

Remind people of these things and charge them before God to stop disputing about words. This serves no useful purpose since it harms those who listen. Be eager to present yourself as acceptable to God, a workman who causes no disgrace, imparting the word of truth without deviation.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 25:4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14

Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
   for you are God my savior.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Good and upright is the LORD; thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
   he teaches the humble his way.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

All the paths of the LORD are kindness and constancy toward those who keep his covenant and his decrees. The friendship of the LORD is with those who fear him, and his covenant, for their instruction.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.
**Gospel Acclamation:** see 2 Timothy 1:10

*Alleluia, alleluia.* Our Savior Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought life to light through the Gospel. *Alleluia, alleluia.*

**Gospel: Mark 12:28-34**

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, “Which is the first of all the commandments?” Jesus replied, “The first is this: *Hear, O Israel!* The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* There is no other commandment greater than these.” The scribe said to him, “Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, *He is One and there is no other than he.* And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

**Meditation:**

At Pentecost we received the gift of the Holy Spirit and were commissioned by Christ to continue his mission: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” His mission is well summed up by our Gospel Acclamation for today: “Our Savior Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought life to light through the Gospel.” He *destroyed death* by giving himself completely in love for us on the Cross. And he *brought life to light* by teaching us the good news of God’s love for us by his words and his actions. That is the mission which he now entrusts to us – to give ourselves in love for our brothers and sisters, and to show them God’s love by our words and actions.

How can we carry out such a mission? First of all, by asking the Lord for his help. Today’s Psalm response gives us a good prayer to use: “*Teach me your ways, O Lord.*” If we are truly asking in sincerity of heart, then we know God will answer this prayer, for “Good and upright is the LORD; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, he teaches the humble his way.”

We find in the Gospel an example of one who is truly seeking to know the ways of God. Unlike the Pharisees and Sadducees who have been trying to trip up Jesus over the past couple of days, this scribe is
sincerely asking Jesus to teach him. He takes Jesus’ response to heart, and even repeats it as though wanting to make sure he remembers it. And so Jesus commends him, saying, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”

Love God and love our brothers and sisters – this is the simple summary of what God calls us to do. This is what we were created for, and this is how we come to our fulfillment. But in our brokenness and sinfulness, this seems impossible for us. We fear being emptied of all love. *Love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength? Love my neighbor as myself? What about me?*

St. Paul gives us the paradoxical answer in the first reading: “If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him.” This is similar to Jesus’ own teaching: “Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it” (Lk 17:33). If we open ourselves to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, we learn the truth that everything is a gift. All that we have is given to us by God. As we freely give of ourselves in love, so we receive much more from God in return. The more we give, the more we open ourselves to receive. But if we try to cling selfishly to what we have, then we close ourselves off from God’s gifts to us, and so we lose the divine life which he is trying to give us.

Paul has certainly learned how to give himself in love. He says, “I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory.” He says something similar in Colossians 1:24: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.”

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul’s wonderful description of love, one of the lines says this: “[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” We can see from our first reading that Paul is living this kind of love as he bears and endures great hardships in order to bring the good news about Jesus to as many people as he can. He even rejoices in his sufferings for the sake of his brothers and sisters. Surely we can say about Paul that he was “not far from the Kingdom of God.”
This is also our call. This is what we aspire to – to spend ourselves in love for God and for our brothers and sisters, not counting the cost and not letting ourselves be deterred by hardships. Let us call upon the Holy Spirit to fill us with grace, so that, like Paul, we may bring the knowledge of Jesus to all those around us, according to our own situation in life.

Do I manifest God’s love for others by my words and actions? Is God’s call for me to love him and my neighbor above all deeply rooted in my entire being? Like Paul, do I rejoice in my sufferings for the sake of Christ Jesus without counting the cost?

Mary, guide me as I bring the knowledge of Jesus to those around me according to my situation in life.

Notes
First Reading: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

You have followed my teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, persecutions that I endured. Yet from all these things the Lord delivered me. In fact, all who want to live religiously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and charlatans will go from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But you, remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, and that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.


O Lord, great peace have they who love your law.
Though my persecutors and my foes are many,
I turn not away from your decrees.

R. O Lord, great peace have they who love your law.
Permanence is your word’s chief trait;
each of your just ordinances is everlasting.

R. O Lord, great peace have they who love your law.
Princes persecute me without cause
but my heart stands in awe of your word.

R. O Lord, great peace have they who love your law.
Those who love your law have great peace,
and for them there is no stumbling block.

R. O Lord, great peace have they who love your law.
I wait for your salvation, O LORD,
and your commands I fulfill.

R. O Lord, great peace have they who love your law.
I keep your precepts and your decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

R. O Lord, great peace have they who love your law.
**Gospel Acclamation: John 14:23**

*Alleluia, alleluia.* Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we will come to him. *Alleluia, alleluia.*

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**Gospel: Mark 12:35-37**

As Jesus was teaching in the temple area he said, “How do the scribes claim that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said:

> The Lord said to my lord,  
> ‘Sit at my right hand  
> until I place your enemies under your feet.’

David himself calls him ‘lord’; so how is he his son?” The great crowd heard this with delight.

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**Meditation:**

This week we have been reflecting on how the Holy Spirit empowers us to go out into the world and continue the mission of Jesus Christ. The whole thrust of this liturgical period of Ordinary Time after Pentecost is exactly this: we who have rejoiced to witness the Incarnation of God’s own Son, who have followed him through his Passion and Death, and have gloried in his Resurrection and Ascension, are now sent forth in the power of the Spirit to be witnesses of the great work which God has done in Christ.

As St. Paul says, “We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us” (2 Cor 5:20). We are called to tell the world about Christ – to be his voice in the world. We are to share his love and mercy with all. People should be able to learn about God by watching and listening to us.

Of course, this can only happen as we continue to grow ever deeper in our own relationship with God. How can we make known to others someone whom we do not know ourselves? This is not a matter of knowing *about* God, as if he were merely a subject to be studied in books. No, we must come to know him as we know a dear friend. We must grow more and more to be one heart and mind with God.

This can seem impossible for us, since God is so far beyond us. As Isaiah prophesied, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways…. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are
my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts” (Is 55:8-9). Indeed, we cannot come to know God by our own efforts. We need the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and hearts. As Paul says, “What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him, this God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor 2:9-10).

So we must again cultivate humility and beg the Holy Spirit to reveal to us “even the depths of God.” We freely admit our ignorance and limitations and do not proudly cling to our own ideas and concepts about God. We look to the three great pillars of our Catholic faith as sure guides to knowing God: Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the ongoing teaching magisterium of the Church. Through these three, the Holy Spirit continually reveals to us the ways of God. In today’s first reading, Paul especially exhorts Timothy to immerse himself in Scripture as the inspired word of God. Timothy knew the Scriptures from his childhood; Paul even says from his “infancy”! This is a good day for us to stop and ask ourselves how much time and effort we put into becoming familiar with the Scriptures.

In the Gospel, Jesus is trying to open the minds of the scribes, who have not remained humble in their search for knowledge of God. They have grown proud and self-assured, believing that they have become “experts” through their study of the law and the prophets. One of the areas in which they believe they have great insight is with regard to the promised Messiah. They have been awaiting the Messiah for generations and have memorized every obscure reference to him throughout their Scriptures. And yet they do not recognize him when he is sitting right in front of them. In an attempt to help them see that they do not understand as much as they think they do, Jesus asks them how the Messiah can be the son of David, which they are sure he will be. Since David refers to the Messiah as “Lord” in Psalm 110, and a father would never refer to his son in this way, it seems that there must be something about the Messiah that the scribes do not understand. He is both “son of David” and he is “lord” of David – that is, greater than David.
We know that the scribes and Pharisees did not open their minds and humbly seek to learn from Jesus. They remained set in their own ideas, and viciously attacked Jesus for challenging them, even to the point of finally arranging his death. This is the kind of persecution which Paul also describes in the first reading, when he says, “All who want to live religiously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and charlatans will go from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived.”

The demon is constantly spreading false ideas about who God is. Especially today he has convinced many that God does not exist at all. Others fear God as a strict judge, waiting to punish them for sins. Still others have accepted the idea of a very bland God who does not seem to care much what anyone does or believes. In our independence and pride, we want a “God” who either stays out of our way, or whom we can control by saying and doing the right things. The demon offers us such a distorted “God” in so many ways today.

Today’s readings teach us to reject this notion of a “God” that we can completely understand and control. Rather, we seek a real unifying relationship with the One True God, who reveals himself to us through the action of the Holy Spirit. Jesus assures us, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we will come to him” (Gospel Acclamation). And so we strive to keep his word, and we open our hearts that he might truly come to us and love us. Then we will know him indeed.

Does my life witness to others the great work which God has done in me through Christ Jesus? Is my relationship with God growing more and more to be one in heart and mind with him? Is my way of life a witness to others of God’s mercy and love for them?

Mary, your relationship with God was unique; open my mind and heart to a true relationship with him.
St. Boniface, pray for us.

Boniface was born in England about 672. He became a Benedictine monk, and was sent by the pope to evangelize the German tribes. As bishop he traveled constantly, establishing dioceses and monasteries. In 754, he was martyred with fifty-two companions in Frisia, in modern day Holland, by members of a hostile tribe. He is known as the Apostle of Germany.
First Reading: 2 Timothy 4:1-8

Beloved: I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry.

For I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 71:8-9, 14-15ab, 16-17, 22

I will sing of your salvation.

My mouth shall be filled with your praise,
    with your glory day by day.
Cast me not off in my old age;
    as my strength fails, forsake me not.
R. I will sing of your salvation.

But I will always hope
    and praise you ever more and more.
My mouth shall declare your justice,
    day by day your salvation.
R. I will sing of your salvation.

I will treat of the mighty works of the Lord;
    O GOD, I will tell of your singular justice.
O God, you have taught me from my youth,
    and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds.
R. I will sing of your salvation.

So will I give you thanks with music on the lyre,
    for your faithfulness, O my God!
I will sing your praises with the harp,
    O Holy One of Israel!
R. I will sing of your salvation.
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 5:3
Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel: Mark 12:38-44
In the course of his teaching Jesus said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext, recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a very severe condemnation.”

He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, “Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.”

Meditation:
We have learned this week that Jesus calls us to continue his mission on earth, to proclaim the good news of God’s love and mercy, and to give ourselves completely in love for our brothers and sisters. We are able to do this because he has sent the Holy Spirit to live within us, drawing us into the very life that he shares with the Father.

St. Paul serves as a worthy example for us of how this call can be lived out. He himself has done what he urges Timothy to do: “Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.”

Paul, a seasoned missionary, has given all that he has in the service of Christ. As he says, “I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me.”

We can see in Paul the joy which comes with opening ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit transforms us more and more in likeness to Christ. Our Psalm for today could well be read as Paul’s prayer of thanksgiving to God for the great work which God has done in and through him: “I will sing of your salvation. My mouth shall be
filled with your praise, with your glory day by day.... I will always hope and praise you ever more and more. My mouth shall declare your justice, day by day your salvation.... So will I give you thanks with music on the lyre, for your faithfulness, O my God! I will sing your praises with the harp, O Holy One of Israel!"

Not many of us have the gifts or the education that Paul had. But this does not mean that God cannot work powerfully through us. It is a wonderful truth that God can make good use of even the very smallest gift which we offer back to him from our hearts. We see this lesson beautifully taught in today’s Gospel. The poor widow puts two small coins – worthless in the eyes of the world – into the temple treasury. Jesus says that she has put in more than all the others. He does not look at the size of the gift, but at the love and generosity with which the gift is given. This is what God values; this is what he uses to make himself known in the world – because this is a true reflection of his own heart. God does not give to us out of his “surplus wealth”; rather he gives us everything that he has, even his own life.

Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus warns us about the danger that, as we go forth as his witnesses in the world, we might begin to draw attention more to ourselves than to him. As we try to follow him, we can fall into the illusion that we are attaining some degree of holiness which sets us above others. Like the scribes, we can start paying more attention to our outward show of religion, our good appearance before others, than to humbly following the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Jesus warns us that those who continue in this way “will receive a very severe condemnation.”

Let us, then, take to heart the message of today’s Gospel Acclamation: “Blessed are the poor in spirit” – the anawim – “for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.” Let us see ourselves as the poor widow, with very little to give to the Lord; but what little we have we give to him with generosity of heart. Then we can rejoice with Paul, knowing that the Holy Spirit will bring us into ever-greater union with God until one day we will share the fullness of life with him. Truly, a “crown of righteousness” is the award that awaits all who long for the Kingdom of heaven.
Am I rooted in the truth that the Holy Spirit lives within me, drawing me into the life he shares with the Father? When I give of myself in any way, do I give out of love and generosity or for recognition by others? In my prayer, do my lips and heart proclaim the greatness and glory of God manifested in all his works?

Mary, the perfect “anawim,” teach me to be poor in spirit and depend only on God.

St. Norbert, pray for us.

Norbert was born into nobility in Germany around 1080 and was raised in the pleasure-loving German court. To ensure his success at court, he had no qualms about becoming a seminarian and receiving whatever financial benefits came with that position. While on a journey one stormy night his horse bucked throwing him to the ground and he became unconscious. When he awoke his first words were, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” He heard this response in his heart, “Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and follow after it.” After this he took his vows seriously and was ordained in 1115. He gave all he owned to the poor and became an itinerant preacher, walking barefoot through Europe begging for bread. He founded a religious community at Prémontré, France, which became known as the Norbertines or Premonstratensians. He started a reform movement that swept through European monastic houses. Reluctantly he accepted the bishopric of Magdeburg. He brought to his new diocese the same love of reform that had transformed his own life. Norbert died in 1134. He was canonized by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.

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