



HOLY FAMILY
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Small Christian Communities Gatherings in Grace

*Solemnity of The Most Holy Trinity
May 26, 2024*

through

*25th Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 22, 2024*

*“For where
two or three
have gathered
together
in my name,
I am there
in their midst”*

(Matthew 18:20)

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COVENANT PRAYER

*Loving God, we are thankful for this Small Christian Community, Gathered in Grace,
to hear your Word and share Your Good News
for the salvation of the world.*

*We believe Jesus is present and continues
to break open the Word and speak to our hearts
as once He did for His disciples.*

*Open our minds, our hearts and our lips
so that what we hear we will understand,
what we understand we will share.*

*Remind us of the needs of our community, our church
and our world as we strive to know your Word.*

*Give us the strength to be present to one another
and while in this community may we always
be respectful of each other and honor a spirit
of confidentiality and trust.*

*Temper our differences with love and understanding,
and call us all to mutual respect and compassion.*

*May this community and the covenant we share,
be a reflection of the covenant you made with our ancestors,
a bond that is only strengthened and deepened each time
we gather to know, love and serve You.*

*When our time of prayer and reflection is complete,
may your Spirit be with us as we,
together with our larger community of faith,
live the Word in our world.*

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen!

GRACE MOMENTS

Share your experience of one of the following Adventures in Grace spiritual exercises since you last met:

1. Grace is God's Presence and Gift of Self. When, where, and/or how did I experience Grace?
2. Baptism is being drenched in the mysterious Love of God. How did I experience myself as baptized?
3. What gift was I able to affirm, call forth, give thanks for?
4. How did I mediate the Grace of Mercy to someone or in some situation.
5. How was I fed/nourished spiritually?

LECTIO DIVINA (Sacred Reading)

Settle into silence for a moment. Remember that God is always present. Allow silence to take root for several long moments.

Someone volunteers to read the First Reading. Invite the group to open their hearts to the passage, be curious, and listen as if they are hearing it for the first time. Listen for a word, phrase, thought, or image that speaks to them today. The text is then read slowly and meditatively. After a moment of silence, continue with the discussion questions for the reading.

Repeat this format for the Second Reading.

Repeat this format for the Gospel, but after the reading and moment of silence, invite group members to speak their word, phrase, thought, or image aloud with no elaboration or discussion. They may also "pass." When all who wish to speak have done so, silently meditate on what has been shared for a few moments, then continue with the discussion questions for the Gospel.

At the end of the discussion, invite everyone to offer prayers of petition. Conclude with:

"For these prayers that we speak, and for those we hold in the silence of our hearts, we pray together in the words that Jesus taught us, 'Our Father, ...' Amen."

SCC-GiG Guide

The Most Holy Trinity through 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

<p>The Most Holy Trinity 5 May 26, 2024</p>	<p>17th Sunday in Ordinary Time 23 July 28, 2024</p>
<p>The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.. 7 June 2, 2024</p>	<p>18th Sunday in Ordinary Time 25 August 4, 2024</p>
<p>10th Sunday in Ordinary Time 9 June 9, 2024</p>	<p>19th Sunday in Ordinary Time 27 August 11, 2024</p>
<p>11th Sunday in Ordinary Time 11 June 16, 2024</p>	<p>20th Sunday in Ordinary Time 29 August 18, 2024</p>
<p>12th Sunday in Ordinary Time 13 June 23, 2024</p>	<p>21st Sunday in Ordinary Time 31 August 25, 2024</p>
<p>13th Sunday in Ordinary Time 15 June 30, 2024</p>	<p>22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time 33 September 1, 2024</p>
<p>14th Sunday of Ordinary Time. 17 July 7, 2024</p>	<p>23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. 36 September 8, 2024</p>
<p>15th Sunday in Ordinary Time 19 July 14, 2024</p>	<p>24th Sunday in Ordinary Time. 39 September 15, 2024</p>
<p>16th Sunday in Ordinary Time 21 July 21, 2024</p>	<p>25th Sunday in Ordinary Time. 42 September 22, 2024</p>

Solemnity of The Most Holy Trinity May 26, 2024

FIRST READING

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy.

Moses said to the people:

"Ask now of the days of old, before your time, ever since God created man upon the earth; ask from one end of the sky to the other: Did anything so great ever happen before? Was it ever heard of?

Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking from the midst of fire, as you did, and live?

Or did any god venture to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, with strong hand and outstretched arm, and by great terrors, all of which the LORD, your God, did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

This is why you must now know, and fix in your heart, that the LORD is God in the heavens above and on earth below, and that there is no other.

You must keep his statutes and commandments that I enjoin on you today, that you and your children after you may prosper, and that you may have long life on the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you forever."

SECOND READING

Romans 8:14-17

A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters:

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a Spirit of adoption, through whom we cry, "Abba, Father!"

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

GOSPEL

Matthew 28:16-20

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them.

When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted.

Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

Solemnity of The Most Holy Trinity • May 26, 2024

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

YHWH created all that exists and through the nation of Israel chose to reveal Himself to all, that He alone is God. Throughout salvation history he has remained faithful to His multi-generational and international promise. Moses appeals to God's people to fix their hearts on the one true God.

- How do we still reconcile these premises in the context of many world religions today?
- Moses asks, "Did a people ever hear the voice of God?" When have you experienced what you felt was the "voice of God"

SECOND READING

Paul encourages not to fall back into fear and enslavement of sin.

- How have you experienced God's grace through the Holy Spirit in time of suffering or death of a loved one?
- As beloved children of God, how do you relate to each essence of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

GOSPEL

- Despite participating in the ministry of Jesus and experiencing the resurrected Jesus, why do you believe the remaining eleven apostles still doubted Him?
- It is said that The Apostles Creed that we recite during our celebration of the Mass evolved from this reading. For Catholics, it is a summary statement of our core beliefs. Recite this as a group, then examine the meaning of each part of the Creed.

I believe in God,
the Father almighty
Creator of heaven and earth
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father
almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and
the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

- What parts of the Creed resonate most with you? Are there any lines that do not resonate?

The Solemnity of The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ June 2, 2024

FIRST READING

Exodus 24:3-8

A reading from the Book of Exodus.

When Moses came to the people and related all the words and ordinances of the LORD, they all answered with one voice, "We will do everything that the LORD has told us."

Moses then wrote down all the words of the LORD and, rising early the next day, he erected at the foot of the mountain an altar and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.

Then, having sent certain young men of the Israelites to offer holocausts and sacrifice young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD, Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls; the other half he splashed on the altar. Taking the book of the covenant, he read it aloud to the people, who answered, "All that the LORD has said, we will heed and do."

Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words of his."

SECOND READING

Hebrews 9:11-15

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

Brothers and sisters:

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.

For this reason he is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

The Solemnity of The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ • June 2, 2024

GOSPEL

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him.

Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"

Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready.

Make the preparations for us there."

The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

He said to them,

"This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many.

Amen, I say to you,

I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Then, after singing a hymn,

they went out to the Mount of Olives.

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

- Moses sprinkles blood on the altar and on the people symbolizing a covenant between God and the people. What symbols in your life represent your connection with God?
- Moses created an altar at the foot of the mountain symbolizing God's presence. Where do you most feel God's presence? Is there a special place that you go to pray?

SECOND READING

The reading states that Christ obtained eternal redemption by offering himself as a perfect sacrifice to God on our behalf. As mediator of a new covenant, Jesus freed us from the bondage of sin and assured us claim to God's grace and mercy.

- How does this inform our prayer life?
- How does this affect our ability to forgive those who trespass against us?

GOSPEL

In Mark's gospel reading, the apostles asked Jesus, "Where do you want us to go, Lord?"

- Was there a time when you were called and were open to receiving God's call? What were the circumstances?

This Passover celebrated by Jesus was the precursor to the Sacrament of the Eucharist. We receive holy communion as "we eat this bread and drink this cup," recalling Jesus' death and promise of His coming again.

- How do you adapt to fully appreciate this Sacrament of the Eucharist as the central aspect of the Mass' celebration and recommitment to Christ if you choose to stream Mass instead of attend in person?

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time June 9, 2024

FIRST READING

Genesis 3:9-15

A reading from the Book of Genesis

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."

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters:
Since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, *I believed, therefore I spoke*, we too believe and therefore we speak, knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence.
Everything indeed is for you, so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God.
Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.
For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.
For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

GOSPEL

Mark 3:20-35

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus came home with his disciples.

Again the crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat.

When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

The scribes who had come from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul,"

and "By the prince of demons he drives out demons."

Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables, "How can Satan drive out Satan?

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand;

that is the end of him.

But no one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man.

Then he can plunder the house.

Amen, I say to you, all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them.

But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin."

For they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

His mother and his brothers arrived.

Standing outside they sent word to him and called him.

A crowd seated around him told him,

"Your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside asking for you."

But he said to them in reply,

"Who are my mother and my brothers?"

And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.

For whoever does the will of God

is my brother and sister and mother."

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

In our first reading, on the loss of innocence and the introduction of evil in the human world, Adam eats of the tree and becomes afraid. Knowing he was naked and vulnerable, he hid from God. When asked why he is naked by God, Adam places blame on the woman, then the woman places blame on the serpent.

- Do we blame others for our sin? How does this pattern still play out today?
- The serpent previously told Eve a partial truth to tempt her to sin. Who are the serpents in today's society?

SECOND READING

Despite the transitory suffering on behalf of the Good News, Paul is not discouraged. In contrast to the first reading, Paul provides a hope-filled perspective that good will triumph over evil.

- With the discord and negativity in the world today, what signs do you see that good is winning over evil?

GOSPEL

To blaspheme is to have an attitude of defiance or denial of the power of God, deny God's power in Christ, and deny that all of us possess the spark of the Holy Spirit despite our sinfulness.

- In light of the parables Jesus provided here, what does it mean to you to "blaspheme against the Holy Spirit?"
- Jesus' relatives wanted to seize him for they thought that he was "out of his mind." When has a friend or family member questioned you for your beliefs? How did you respond?

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time June 16, 2024

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 17:22-24

A reading from the Prophet Ezekiel.

Thus says the Lord GOD:

I, too, will take from the crest of the cedar,
from its topmost branches tear off a tender
shoot, and plant it on a high and lofty
mountain; on the mountain heights of Israel I
will plant it.

It shall put forth branches and bear fruit,
and become a majestic cedar.

Birds of every kind shall dwell beneath it,
every winged thing in the shade of its boughs.

And all the trees of the field shall know
that I, the LORD, bring low the high tree,
lift high the lowly tree, wither up the green tree,
and make the withered tree bloom.

As I, the LORD, have spoken, so will I do.

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters:

We are always courageous,
although we know that while we are at home in
the body we are away from the Lord,
for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Yet we are courageous,
and we would rather leave the body and go
home to the Lord.

Therefore, we aspire to please him,
whether we are at home or away.

For we must all appear before the judgment
seat of Christ, so that each may receive
recompense, according to what he did in the
body, whether good or evil.

GOSPEL

Mark 4:26-34

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus said to the crowds:

“This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and through it all the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how.

Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come.”

He said,

“To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it?

It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth.

But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.”

With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it.

Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

Despite suffering during captivity, Ezekiel tells us that God promises restoration of the nation of Israel by plucking a shoot from the mighty cedar tree (Babylon) and planting it on a high and lofty mountain so that Israel will reveal their mighty God to all nations (birds of every kind).

- What are the areas of your life you have seeded, cultivated and harvested for the glory of God?
- What is meant by the statement that the Lord will “bring low the high tree, lift high the lowly tree, wither the green tree, and make the withered tree bloom?”
- While God is sovereign over all, what is our responsibility towards all of creation?

SECOND READING

- Paul talks about walking by “faith, not by sight.” How are you courageously walking by faith? What could that look like to you?
- What fuels your faith in the belief in eternal life after death?

GOSPEL

Mark informs us that our spiritual growth is ready to be released like a seed’s potential when it’s planted. This inevitable spiritual growth process is guided by God’s grace, but through our participation we will naturally produce fruit.

- Are you working on cultivating your spiritual life, to “Be More” in God’s Kingdom on Earth, or are you focusing on “Doing More” to “get to heaven” when you transition from your earthly life?
- Jesus spoke the Word to the crowds as they were able to understand it, yet to his own disciples he explained everything in private. Outside of the weekly Sunday readings, do you spend time with Scripture to learn what messages God has for you? What does that look like?

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time June 23, 2024

FIRST READING

Job 38:1, 8-11

A reading from the Book of Job.

The Lord addressed Job out of the storm and said:

Who shut within doors the sea,
when it burst forth from the womb;
when I made the clouds its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling bands?
When I set limits for it and fastened the
bar of its door, and said:
Thus far shall you come but no
farther, and here shall your proud
waves be stilled!

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters:

The love of Christ impels us,
once we have come to the conviction that one
died for all;
therefore, all have died.
He indeed died for all,
so that those who live might no longer live
for themselves but for him who for their sake
died and was raised.
Consequently, from now on we regard no one
according to the flesh;
even if we once knew Christ according to the
flesh, yet now we know him so no longer.
So whoever is in Christ is a new creation:
the old things have passed away;
behold, new things have come.

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time • June 23, 2024

GOSPEL

Mark 4:35-41

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

On that day, as evening drew on, Jesus said to his disciples:

“Let us cross to the other side.”

Leaving the crowd, they took Jesus with them in the boat just as he was.

And other boats were with him.

A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up.

Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion.

They woke him and said to him,

“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Quiet! Be still!”

The wind ceased and there was great calm.

Then he asked them, “Why are you terrified?

Do you not yet have faith?”

They were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?”

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

This reading focuses on God’s immense power over everything.

- How do you balance the image from this reading with the image of the God that you hold close to your heart?

SECOND READING

Paul states that “from now on we regard no one according to the flesh,” rather “whoever is in Christ is a new creation.”

- Why is it sometimes difficult for us to view others as beloved children of God? What actions can we personally take to change that biased view?

GOSPEL

- The disciples were awestruck having seen God at work. When have you encountered a terrifying storm in your life where you felt that you were filled with great awe of God’s mercy and love?
- What does it feel like to experience a “great calm” after a terrifying experience or an affliction was relieved?
- What practices do you follow to prepare yourself for the eventual storms in your life?

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time June 30, 2024

FIRST READING

Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

A reading from the Book of Wisdom

God did not make death,
nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being; and the creatures of the world are wholesome, and there is not a destructive drug among them nor any domain of the netherworld on earth, for justice is undying.
For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who belong to his company experience it.

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters:
As you excel in every respect, in faith, discourse, knowledge, all earnestness, and in the love we have for you, may you excel in this gracious act also.

For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.
Not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their needs, so that their abundance may also supply your needs, that there may be equality.
As it is written:
Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less.

GOSPEL

Mark 5:21-43

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea. One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live." He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him.

There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who has touched my clothes?" But his disciples said to Jesus, "You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'" And he looked around to see who had done it. The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction." While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?" Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid; just have faith."

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time • June 30, 2024

He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. So he went in and said to them, "Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep." And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out.

He took along the child's father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was. He took the child by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum*," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. At that they were utterly astounded. He gave strict orders that no one should know this and said that she should be given something to eat.

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

God created man and woman in His image and nature, fashioning all to be whole and wholesome. The Wisdom author insists that despite sin entering the world, justice reigns. Biblical justice (as opposed to our contemporary legal term) dictates that we are to be in right relationship with God and engage in right behavior towards others.

- What does this look like to you?
- The author interprets death in the Garden of Eden as a spiritual death, or a separation from God. Explain a dark time in your life when you felt that God did not hear you.
- Because of the envy of the devil, death and destruction entered the world, yet we are called to resist and love righteousness. How do you imagine "the devil" working in our lives?

SECOND READING

- Paul talks about sharing your abundance so that there might be equality. Do you feel that we as a community are doing enough to help those in need? (Holy Family, your SCC-GiG). What additional steps can we take?

GOSPEL

This passage reflects the healing energy between Jesus and the afflicted woman who was near death and Jairus' dying daughter.

- When have you given a healing touch to someone who was suffering? When have you received a healing touch? What did you feel as a result?
- Many people were pressing against Jesus, yet he felt "that power had gone out from him" only when his cloak was boldly touched by the woman who believed He could heal her. What does this inform us about how we should pray?
- Why do you think Jesus made sure the girl was given something to eat? What does that tell us as disciples of Christ?

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time July 7, 2024

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 2:2-5

A reading from the Prophet Ezekiel

As the LORD spoke to me, the spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard the one who was speaking say to me:

Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day.

Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you.

But you shall say to them: Thus says the LORD GOD!

And whether they heed or resist—for they are a rebellious house—they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters:

That I, Paul, might not become too elated, because of the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.”

I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Gospel

Mark 6:1-6

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished.

They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands!

Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?

And are not his sisters here with us?"

And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house."

So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time • July 7, 2024

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

- Ezekiel speaks of the Israelites rebelling against him. When have you had a situation where someone questioned your faith or church affiliation? How did you respond?
- Ezekiel talks of having a vision where God spoke to him and the spirit entered into him. Have you or someone you know experienced what would be considered God talking to you? What was it like? What were the circumstances?

SECOND READING

- Paul recalls that despite repeatedly begging the Lord to be healed of a "thorn in the flesh," the Lord insisted that his grace should suffice. Paul came to understand the blessing of his affliction. How would you describe a "thorn in the flesh" in today's terms?

GOSPEL

- Have you suffered from rejection from friends, neighbors, or family? How did your faith help you through those times?
- What preconceptions of God are limiting your ability to see and hear him working in your life? When have you recognized God's presence in your life recently?

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time July 14, 2024

FIRST READING

Amos 7:12-15

A reading from the Prophet Amos

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos,
“Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of
Judah!

There earn your bread by prophesying,
but never again prophesy in Bethel;
for it is the king’s sanctuary and a royal
temple.”

Amos answered Amaziah, “I was no prophet,
nor have I belonged to a company of
prophets;

I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores.

The LORD took me from following the
flock, and said to me,

Go, prophesy to my people Israel.”

SECOND READING

Ephesians 1:3-14

A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ
with every spiritual blessing in the heavens,
as he chose us in him, before the foundation
of the world, to be holy and without blemish
before him.

In love he destined us for adoption to himself
through Jesus Christ, in accord with the
favor of his will, for the praise of the glory
of his grace that he granted us in the beloved.
In him we have redemption by his blood,
the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord
with the riches of his grace that he lavished
upon us.

In all wisdom and insight, he has made
known to us the mystery of his will in accord
with his favor that he set forth in him as a
plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all
things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.

In him we were also chosen, destined in
accord with the purpose of the One who
accomplishes all things according to the
intention of his will, so that we might exist
for the praise of his glory, we who first
hoped in Christ.

In him you also, who have heard the word of
truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have
believed in him, were sealed with the
promised holy Spirit, which is the first
installment of our inheritance toward
redemption as God’s possession, to the
praise of his glory.

GOSPEL

Mark 6:7-13

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits.

He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—

no food, no sack, no money in their belts.

They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic.

He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave.

Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them.”

So they went off and preached repentance.

The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

- Amos was the only Biblical prophet from Judah (the southern kingdom) prophesying Israel’s exile (the northern kingdom). How would you define a “prophet?” Who are the prophets of today?
- Amos claims that he was called by God to prophesize to the people of Israel. Was there a time that you felt that you were called on by God to pursue something or to take action?

SECOND READING

- The writer speaks to the Jews and the Gentiles as being sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit so that we might exist to praise and glorify God. Does that statement resonate with you? What does that look like in your life?

GOSPEL

Jesus informs the apostles that they have been given the power of healing and exorcism. That must have been daunting.

- When have you experienced a new responsibility that took you out of your comfort zone? How did you feel about taking on a risk that you knew would be challenging? If you did well, where did your success come from?
- Jesus told his apostles, “Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet.” When have you left someone or a place that didn’t connect with you as a beloved child of God? How were you better as a result?

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time July 21, 2024

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 23:1-6

A reading from the Prophet Jeremiah.

Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture, says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, against the shepherds who shepherd my people:

You have scattered my sheep and driven them away. You have not cared for them, but I will take care to punish your evil deeds. I myself will gather the remnant of my flock from all the lands to which I have driven them and bring them back to their meadow; there they shall increase and multiply. I will appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear and tremble; and none shall be missing, says the LORD.

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; as king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security. This is the name they give him: "The LORD our justice."

SECOND READING

Ephesians 2:13-18

A reading from the Letter to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters:

In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

GOSPEL

Mark 6:30-34

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.”

People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat.

So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them.

When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

- The term shepherd was commonly used as a metaphor for rulers or leaders in the Hebrew Bible. In that context, who are the “shepherds” of today that care only for themselves and scatter the sheep? Who are the shepherds who work to pull the flock together?

SECOND READING

- The second reading explores the unity between human and divine. What in your life draws you closer to God?

GOSPEL

- Jesus is well aware the disciples were exhausted after their journey and invites them to recuperate, imploring them to come away to a deserted place and rest. Where is your quiet place? Where do you find peace and a connection with God?
- Jesus is our shepherd who has great compassion for us, and teaches us many things. How do you let him take care of you? Do you take the time to dream, stare at the stars, take a walk, meditate, converse with friends and God, read, pray, count your blessings, sing a prayer of praise?

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time July 28, 2024

FIRST READING

2 Kings 4:42-44

A reading from the Second Book of Kings.

A man came from Baal-shalishah bringing to Elisha, the man of God, twenty barley loaves made from the firstfruits, and fresh grain in the ear.

Elisha said, "Give it to the people to eat."

But his servant objected, "How can I set this before a hundred people?"

Elisha insisted, "Give it to the people to eat."

"For thus says the LORD,

"They shall eat and there shall be some left over."

And when they had eaten, there was some left over, as the LORD had said.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 4:1-6

A reading from the Letter to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters:

I, a prisoner for the Lord,
urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

GOSPEL

John 6:1-15

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee.

A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick.

Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near.

When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little."

One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?"

Jesus said, "Have the people recline."

Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number.

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted.

When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples,

"Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted."

So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat.

When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world."

Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

- Elisha's multiplication of food is the background for the miracle of Jesus feeding the "five thousand" men. Share a time when you were involved in an event to help people that blossomed into something greater than expected.
- When have you performed an act or service realizing that God was working through you? What did it look and feel like?

SECOND READING

- Our reading lists the virtues of love, humility, gentleness, and patience that are meant to promote unity. Which of these virtues come most easily for you? Are there others that you find more difficult?

GOSPEL

- In light of the first reading with Elisha and his servant, why do you believe that Jesus tested Philip regarding where they could buy enough food to feed the crowd? When have you felt that you've been tested either for good reason, or perhaps unjustly? If you felt unjustly tested, did you come to realize that God had a better plan over time?
- The compassionate disciples were overwhelmed by the immensity of the task to feed the large crowd of people. When have you been in a challenging situation that appears hopeless in human terms? Did you ask God to intervene? What were the results?

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time August 4, 2024

FIRST READING

Exodus 10:2-4, 12-15

A reading from the Book of Exodus

The whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "Would that we had died at the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread! But you had to lead us into this desert to make the whole community die of famine!"

Then the LORD said to Moses,
"I will now rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion; thus will I test them, to see whether they follow my instructions or not.

"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them: In the evening twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread, so that you may know that I, the LORD, am your God."

In the evening quail came up and covered the camp. In the morning a dew lay all about the camp, and when the dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert were fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground. On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, "What is this?" for they did not know what it was. But Moses told them, "This is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

SECOND READING

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

A reading from the Letter to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters:
I declare and testify in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds;
that is not how you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, that you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth.

GOSPEL

John 6:24-35

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

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

And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal."

So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?"

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent."

So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written:

He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

So they said to him,

"Sir, give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them,

"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

God acknowledges the Israelites desperate hunger for food by providing them with quail in the evening and bread (or manna) in the morning, which they did not immediately recognize as food.

- Why do we sometimes not recognize that the unexpected is a gift from our God who knows what we truly need?
- How does this reading symbolize how a yearning or hunger can create the potential for a closer union with God? What triggered the yearning or hunger for God in your life?

SECOND READING

- The reading appeals to changing your way of life to be renewed through Christ. This is defined as moving away from your "old self" to a "new self." In this context, what are some of the behaviors or characteristics of people's "old selves?" What does it look like to move to a "new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth?"

GOSPEL

Jesus' answer to "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" is "to believe in the one who sent him" or to have faith.

- Is there a person in your life who has demonstrated a deep spiritual faith? What is it about this person's approach to life that is most inspiring?
- The crowd asked for a sign so they might see and believe in Jesus. When have you asked for a sign? What was it and what were the circumstances?

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time August 11, 2024

FIRST READING

1 Kings 19:4-8

A reading from the Second Book of Kings.

Elijah went a day's journey into the desert, until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death saying:

"This is enough, O LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree, but then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and eat.

Elijah looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water.

After he ate and drank, he lay down again, but the angel of the LORD came back a second time, touched him, and ordered,

"Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!"

He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

A reading from the Letter to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters:

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption.

All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.

So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.

GOSPEL

John 6:41-51

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

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

"Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph?

Do we not know his father and mother?

Then how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

Jesus answered and said to them,

"Stop murmuring among yourselves.

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

It is written in the prophets:

They shall all be taught by God.

Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father.

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

I am the bread of life.

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

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

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

Having courage and resolve give way to fear and defeat, Elijah became unwilling to continue the treacherous 40 day journey to the mountain. God's angel encouraged Elijah to eat and drink to strengthen himself in order to endure the hardship for the long journey.

- How do you find strength to face the difficult challenges in your daily life?
- When has an "angel" intervened in your life to give you strength when you were down or about to give up?

SECOND READING

- The final line of this reading is a reminder that our moral life does not come out of a prescribed set of virtues to emulate, rather it grows organically by seeking God, who is seeking us. How do these differ? How would this difference change the way you interact with God and the world?

GOSPEL

- The Jews simply could not move beyond the fact that Jesus was the child of Mary and Joseph, and initially did not take him seriously. If you knew someone from your neighborhood who became famous, how would you respond? Would it require more for you to take that person seriously?
- When have you paid less attention to someone who was speaking the truth, because they didn't look or behave in a way with which you were comfortable?
- The gospel writer John explains to us that Jesus is the Bread of Life brought down from the Father in heaven so that we may have eternal life in Him. Like the manna provided to the Israelites wandering in the desert, Jesus provides all that is needed for our daily sustenance. Do you truly believe that what God provides will suffice? Do you live your life accordingly?

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time August 18, 2024

FIRST READING

Proverbs 9:1-6

A reading from the Book of Proverbs

Wisdom has built her house,
 she has set up her seven columns;
 she has dressed her meat, mixed her wine,
 yes, she has spread her table.
 She has sent out her maidens; she calls
 from the heights out over the city:
 "Let whoever is simple turn in here;
 To the one who lacks understanding, she says,
 Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I
 have mixed! Forsake foolishness that you may
 live; advance in the way of understanding."

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5:15-20

A reading from the Letter to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters:
 Watch carefully how you live,
 not as foolish persons but as wise,
 making the most of the opportunity,
 because the days are evil.
 Therefore, do not continue in ignorance,
 but try to understand what is the will of the
 Lord. And do not get drunk on wine, in which
 lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,
 addressing one another in psalms and hymns
 and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the
 Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and
 for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus
 Christ to God the Father.

GOSPEL

John 6:51-58

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to the crowds:
 "I am the living bread that came down from
 heaven; whoever eats this bread will live
 forever; and the bread that I will give
 is my flesh for the life of the world."

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying,
 "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"
 Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you,
 unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and
 drink his blood, you do not have life within
 you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
 has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last
 day.

For my flesh is true food,
 and my blood is true drink.
 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
 remains in me and I in him.

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

This is the bread that came down from heaven.
 Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died,
 whoever eats this bread will live forever."

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

- This reading uses banquet imagery to speak of how growth in maturity and wisdom comes about. How do you dine at Wisdom's feast to grow in knowledge, understanding and spiritual maturity?
- Is there a person that affected your life because of the wisdom that they imparted? What were they like? What do you believe made them grounded in wisdom?

SECOND READING

The second reading offers a message on living with prudence and caution to direct us toward our pursuit of the Lord. When we allow ourselves to be filled with God's spirit overflowing with love and grace, we adopt a healthy appreciation of gratitude that guides our lives.

- What is your "grace gauge?"
- Are you near full of His grace, or running on empty?
- What are you thankful for?
- How has your relationship with God evolved through your life?

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

GOSPEL

- Progressing from the first reading from Wisdom, John informs us that to consume something provided by God is not enough to attain eternal life. More is needed. The wisdom of the banquet of his body and blood is not simply about human nourishment. Jesus explains that consuming true food and drink of God draws us through death into resurrection and the fullness of eternal life. What does this mean to you?
- In the gospel reading, Jesus states, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him." Catholics ritualize this through participation in the Eucharist. What role does the Eucharist play in your life?

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time August 25, 2024

FIRST READING

Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b

A reading from the Book of Joshua.

Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, summoning their elders, their leaders, their judges, and their officers. When they stood in ranks before God, Joshua addressed all the people:
"If it does not please you to serve the LORD, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are now dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

But the people answered,
"Far be it from us to forsake the LORD for the service of other gods. For it was the LORD, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of slavery. He performed those great miracles before our very eyes and protected us along our entire journey and among the peoples through whom we passed. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5:2a, 25-32

A reading from the Letter to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters:
Live in love, as Christ loved us. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.
So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.
For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.
This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

GOSPEL

John 6:60-69

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

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

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

As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.

Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"

Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

The scene in today's reading transpires at the end of Joshua's life after doing everything that God had asked of him. As they enter the promised land where their ancestors served other gods, Joshua boldly recommits to His God, "As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." The reading highlights the power of crisis moments in our journey with God.

- Have there been critical times in your life when you recommitted to Christ?
- Sacraments are celebrated through rituals marking critical moments in our lives. What importance do Catholic rituals play in your spiritual life? Which of the sacraments are the most meaningful to you?

SECOND READING

- St. Paul tells us to "Be subordinate to one another out of reverence to Christ." What does it mean to you to express mutual subordination to your spouse? Why is it important for marriage to be grounded in Christ?
- What do you think St. Paul meant when he instructed that "husbands should love their wives as their own bodies?"

GOSPEL

- The disciples find Jesus' words too hard to accept and abandon him. But when Jesus presses the 12 disciples, they respond by recommitting themselves to him, just as Joshua and God's chosen people recommitted to God. When have you abandoned challenging teachings that you knew were true, but too difficult to accept?
- Jesus knew some would abandon and betray him. Remember Jesus chose Judas knowing this! When there is division in the Church, what do you hold on to?

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time September 1, 2024

FIRST READING

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy

Moses said to the people:

"Now, Israel, hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe, that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

In your observance of the commandments of the LORD, your God, which I enjoin upon you, you shall not add to what I command you nor subtract from it.

Observe them carefully, for thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations, who will hear of all these statutes and say, 'This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people.'

For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him?

Or what great nation has statutes and decrees that are as just as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"

SECOND READING

James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

A reading from the Letter of James.

Dearest brothers and sisters:

All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change.

He willed to give us birth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls.

Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

GOSPEL

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

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands.

—For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders.

And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds. —

So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?"

He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written:

*This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines human precepts.*

You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition."

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

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

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

Through Moses, God provided the people of Israel a law that was complete and sufficient for righteous living. We are called to listen to God's Wisdom in His Word and obey by faithfully applying these truths.

- How did the establishment of certain truths or principles become essential in the development of your spiritual life?
- Do you still faithfully abide by those core Scripture-based principles?
- How do you pass truths on to the next generation?

SECOND READING

Our God who said, "Let there be light" and created the enduring great lights also created us, each with a spark of the divine. We must nurture the soul planted in us by heeding His Word.

- What practices do you follow to nurture your soul?
- What message did you hear in Scripture this week? Based on hearing the Word, how might you do the will of God?

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time • September 1, 2024

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

GOSPEL

The Pharisees criticize Jesus and his disciples for not following the tradition of the elders which were human laws, not instituted by God. While some traditions are sacred and eternal, some man-made traditions should adapt to cultural change.

- Do you remember any Vatican II changes of church tradition; how did the change make you feel?

Mark's audience hears Jesus pronounce "all foods clean" (verse 9) which moves the original rabbinic debate of cleanliness to a whole new level that would be shocking and controversial to virtually every first-century Jew.

- Could there be some traditions in our church today that should be phased out because they thwart the will of God in our contemporary society?
- Should the Church exclude those who appear to us as being different, expecting them to conform to the norm, or should we continue to consider how we maintain fidelity to God's Law while being welcoming to all who seek and are deserving of God's love?

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time September 8, 2024

FIRST READING

Isaiah 35:4-7a

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the LORD:
 Say to those whose hearts are frightened:
 Be strong, fear not!
 Here is your God,
 he comes with vindication;
 with divine recompense
 he comes to save you.
 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened,
 the ears of the deaf be cleared;
 then will the lame leap like a stag,
 then the tongue of the mute will sing.
 Streams will burst forth in the desert,
 and rivers in the steppe.
 The burning sands will become pools,
 and the thirsty ground, springs of water.

SECOND READING

James 2:1-5

A reading from the Letter of James.

My brothers and sisters, show no partiality
 as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord
 Jesus Christ.
 For if a man with gold rings and fine clothes
 comes into your assembly, and a poor person in
 shabby clothes also comes in, and you pay
 attention to the one wearing the fine clothes
 and say, "Sit here, please," while you say to the
 poor one, "Stand there, " or "Sit at my feet, "
 have you not made distinctions among
 yourselves and become judges with evil
 designs?

 Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters.
 Did not God choose those who are poor in the
 world to be rich in faith and heirs of the
 kingdom that he promised to those who love
 him?

GOSPEL

Mark 7:31-37

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Again Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him.

He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him,

"Ephphatha!"— that is, "Be opened!" —

And immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly.

He ordered them not to tell anyone.

But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

- God speaks to anxious people, to fear not, have hope, God is with you and will sustain you. How do you give up your daily anxieties to the Lord?
- God assures us that restorative justice is on its way. As opposed to traditional forms of justice which focuses on retribution, where do you see restorative justice happening today? Are you even aware of this alternative approach to justice? How can each of us participate in promoting Christ-like restorative justice?

SECOND READING

- James addresses economic inequality and favoritism in the early church. Who do we shun in our church, and in today's society?
- What can we do better to ensure no partiality in our parish, in our neighborhood, in our family?

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FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

GOSPEL

Jesus' multi-step healing of a deaf and mute man in Gentile territory included the use of saliva believed to have healing properties, and concluded with Jesus' command for his ears to be opened and tongue to be released.

- How did this rudimentary form of ASL (American Sign Language) help this deaf man acquire healing?
- How do you think Holy Family is doing with accommodating people with disabilities? What can we do differently, both at Holy Family and in our own lives?
- Jesus openly reaches out to people with disabilities. How do you respond when you encounter someone with a disability? How has your acceptance of others with disabilities changed over time?

The Rite of Ephphatha is a Roman Catholic tradition (optional) in baptism that entails the celebrant praying for the opening of the ears and mouth of the newly baptized to hear and proclaim the Gospel.

- Have you found yourself needing to have your eyes and ears opened to understanding the Gospel message?
- What helped you hear, see and proclaim God's Word?

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time September 15, 2024

FIRST READING

Isaiah 50:5-9a

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

The Lord GOD opens my ear that I may hear;
and I have not rebelled,
have not turned back.

I gave my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who plucked my beard;
my face I did not shield
from buffets and spitting.

The Lord GOD is my help,
therefore I am not disgraced;
I have set my face like flint,
knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

He is near who upholds my right;
if anyone wishes to oppose me,
let us appear together.

Who disputes my right?

Let that man confront me.

See, the Lord GOD is my help;
who will prove me wrong?

SECOND READING

James 2:14-18

A reading from the Letter of James.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters,
if someone says he has faith but does not have
works?

Can that faith save him?

If a brother or sister has nothing to wear
and has no food for the day, and one of you
says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat
well, " but you do not give them the necessities
of the body, what good is it?

So also faith of itself,
if it does not have works, is dead.

Indeed someone might say,
"You have faith and I have works."

Demonstrate your faith to me without works,
and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my
works.

GOSPEL

Mark 8:27-35

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Christ." Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days.

He spoke this openly.

Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it."

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

In this portion of the Servant Song from Isaiah God opens his servant's ears so that he may have the resolve to remain faithful to God during times of great suffering.

- How might we turn to God in our suffering to gain the strength needed to not only persevere but to thrive?
- Does this reading call to mind any New Testament passage? Hint, it's in all four gospels.

SECOND READING

- As we say at our parish, "The Mass never ends, we go in peace to serve the Lord and each other. Thanks be to God." How do you live this in your daily life?
- Is faith without works dead? What would it take to "turn up the heat" in order to live the gospel message more fully?

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

GOSPEL

Jesus takes the disciples to what was known as the “Gates of Hell,” the “red light district” of Caesarea Philippi, and in facing the epitome of evil, implores them to ignore the voices of others and declare their allegiance to Jesus, the Christ.

- When have you encountered evil and responded by doing what is right, in the name of Jesus Christ?
- Jesus publicly explains the cost of discipleship in three parts. Describe what it means to you to 1. Deny yourself. 2. Take up your cross. 3. Follow Jesus (not on Instagram).
- In the last line of the Gospel, how do you interpret Jesus’ statement, “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it?”
- How has this unfolded in your life?

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time September 22, 2024

FIRST READING

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

A reading from the Book of Wisdom

The wicked say:

Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings, reproaches us for transgressions of the law and charges us with violations of our training.

Let us see whether his words be true; let us find out what will happen to him.

For if the just one be the son of God, God will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes. With revilement and torture let us put the just one to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience.

Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him.

SECOND READING

James 3:16-4:3

A reading from the Letter of James.

Beloved:

Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice.

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.

Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members?

You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war.

You do not possess because you do not ask. You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

GOSPEL

Mark 9:30-37

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it.

He was teaching his disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise.”

But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him.

They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them,

“What were you arguing about on the way?”

But they remained silent.

They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest.

Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”

Taking a child, he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, “Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me;

and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me.”

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

FIRST READING

One who is just and righteous maintains a commitment to doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord, raises the bar of behavior and calls forth accountability of everyone, which is threatening to the wicked.

- What does Christ’s passion and death tell us about how God cares for those who maintain patience and a commitment to God’s law, while enduring hardships for his sake?

SECOND READING

James expounds on the contrast between the wicked and wise from the first reading from Wisdom. The wicked reap what they sow; their envy and selfish ambition compel them to wage endless wars and they are never satisfied; instead, they end up feeling empty and hopeless.

- What do you believe drives the behavior of wicked people?
- Have you been caught in a cycle of conflict that drained you of hope?

GOSPEL

- Jesus scolded the disciples who were acting childish as they were fighting to win God’s grace, arguing over which among them was the greatest. Recall a time when you were so caught up in a power struggle that you missed the essence of your mission.
- Jesus then proceeded to hug a child, proclaiming “whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me...and the One who sent me.” Recall a time you chose to foster an open, docile spirit over ambition and wicked desires.
- In retrospect, what did you learn from these two approaches?