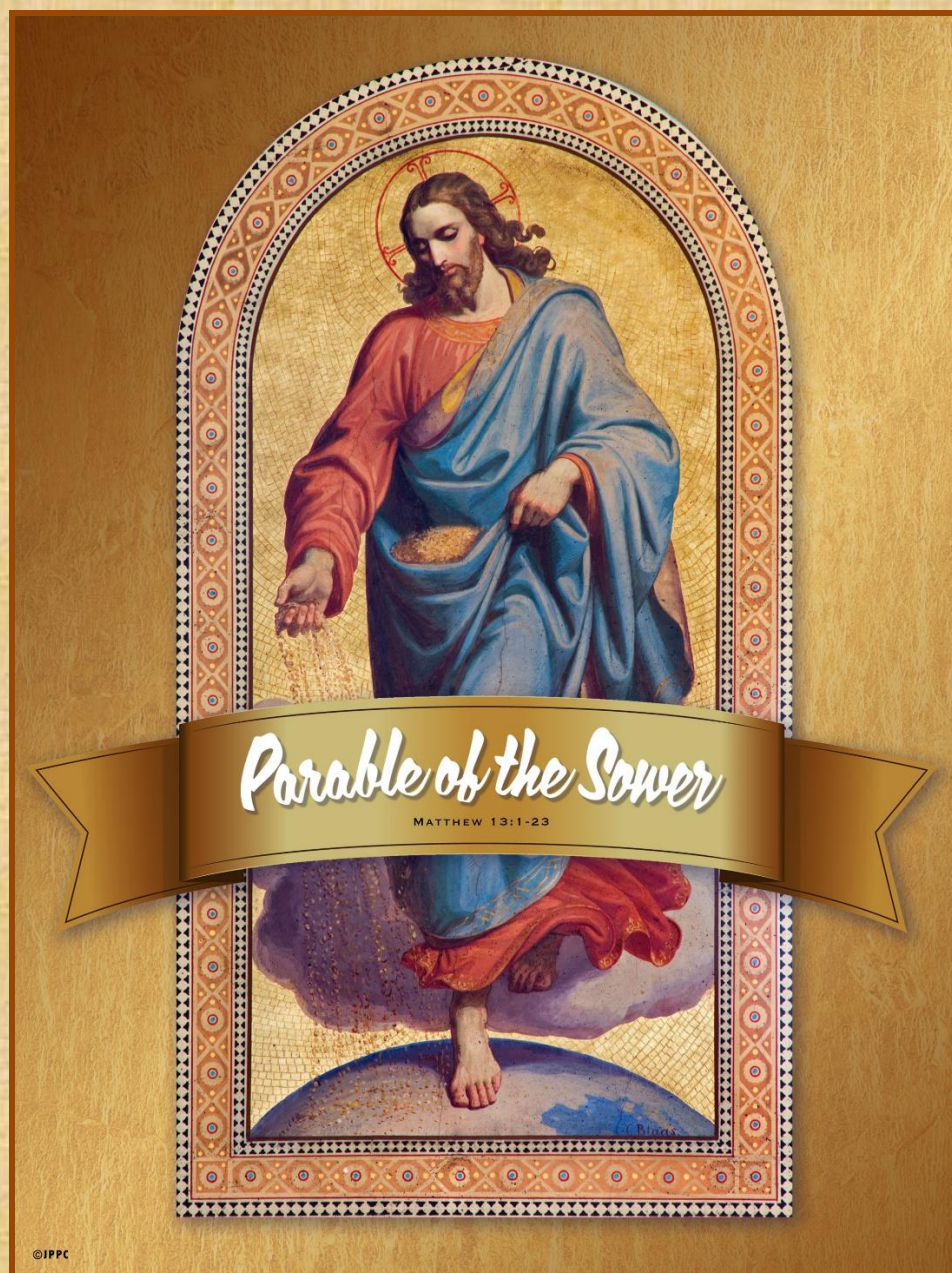


Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 16, 2023



Saint Mary 14 Park Street + Sacred Heart 58 Church Street + Saint Mark 105 Stanley Street
North Attleborough, Massachusetts

Transfiguration of the Lord Parish

Rev. David A. Costa, Pastor
Rev. Deacon Joseph E. Regali, Parish Deacon
Sister Kathleen A. Corrigan, S.U.S.C., Pastoral Associate
Rev. Kenneth R. Sicard, O.P. & Rev. R. Gabriel Pivarnik, O.P., Weekend Assistants
Mrs. Jean Howard, Business Manager
Mrs. Elaine Corvese, Director of Religious Education
Mrs. Lisa Serak, Principal, Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School
Mr. Miguel Peixoto, Buildings Supervisor
Mr. James Kitsock, Building Maintenance

Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School

Mrs. Lisa Serak, Principal
57 Richards Avenue,
North Attleborough, Massachusetts 02760
(508) 695-3072 FAX (508) 695-9074
smsh@smsh.dfrcs.org www.smshschool.com

Saint Mary Cemetery

Mr. Jarrod Ward, Superintendent
Towne Street
North Attleborough, Massachusetts 02760
(508) 695-1173 or email ripco@comcast.net

Sacrament of Reconciliation (Summer)

Saint Mark Church • Saturday 3:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Sacrament of Baptism

Baptisms are celebrated on designated Sunday afternoons at 12:30 pm, with a limit of four families at each baptism. Please contact the office at stmaryna@noozi.com for more information and available dates/locations.

Sacrament of Marriage

Marriage is usually celebrated on Saturday morning and afternoon. Please contact the Parish Office at least nine months in advance to begin preparation.

Sacrament of the Sick

Pastoral care to those in need of the sacrament of the sick is arranged through the parish office. Please call to arrange a visit.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Adoration is offered on the first Friday of each month in **Saint Mark Church** (*for the summer months*), beginning at 9:00 am and ending at 6:00 pm with Benediction.

Parish Offering

If you are attending in person, you may drop your contribution in the collection basket. You are welcome to mail your budget envelope to the parish office, at 14 Park Street, North Attleborough, MA 02760. You may also leave your envelope in the drop box located outside the parish office door, to the right on the landing. Or you can use this link for online giving:

<https://app.gabrielsoft.com/guest/mafrdiocese/31>

Thank you for your ongoing support!

Weekend Masses

Saturday 4:00 pm **Saint Mark Church (Summer)**

Sunday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**

Sunday 9:30 am **Saint Mark Church (Summer)**

Sunday 11:00 am **Saint Mark Church (Summer)**

Weekday Masses

Monday 4:30 pm **Saint Mark Church (for Summer)**

Rosary for Life 4:00 pm each Monday prior to 4:30 pm Mass

Tuesday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**

Wednesday 4:30 pm **Saint Mark Church (for Summer)**

Thursday 8:00 am Communion Service

Saint Mark Church

Links to: Transfiguration of the Lord Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/Transfiguration-of-the-Lord-Parish-North-Attleborough-106529317647894/>

YouTube at <https://tinyurl.com/ysfaxaty>

Parish Office

14 Park Street, North Attleborough,
Massachusetts 02760

Parish e-mail • stmaryna@noozi.com

Parish website • www.saintmaryna.com

Phone 508-695-6161 Fax 508-695-5248

Faith Formation • TransfigurationRelEd@gmail.com

Faith Formation • 508-695-3823

MASS Intentions

July 15/16- 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Saturday July 15 – Vigil (St. Mark)
4:00 pm Bob Chagnon

Deceased Members of the
Clark Family

Sunday July 16 (St. Mark)
8:00 am Elizabeth D'Abate

Kathleen Moore

Sunday July 16 (St. Mark)
9:30 am George & Ann Fish

Sunday July 16 (St. Mark)
11:00 am Paul Poirier

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Monday July 17 (St. Mark)
4:30 pm David Parenteau

Michael Judge

Tuesday July 18 (St. Mark)
8:00 am People of the Parish

Wednesday July 19 (St. Mark)
4:30 pm Michael Judge

Thursday July 20 (St. Mark)
8:00 am Sandra Stello

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July 22/23- 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Saturday July 22 – Vigil (St. Mark)
4:00 pm Mark Vandette

Sunday July 23 (St. Mark)
8:00 am John & Elizabeth McCarthy

Sunday July 23 (St. Mark)
9:30 am Edward & Barbara Joyce

Sunday July 23 (St. Mark)
11:00 am Shaun Kenney

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Parish Contributions

Collection for July 1/2: \$12,988.22

Peter's Pence: \$1,067.50

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Thank You!

Many thanks to all who helped prepare our "Welcome Receptions" last weekend as we began our summer stay at our Stanley Street property, Saint Mark Church. Special thanks to the members of the Women's Guild, led by Karen Smith, who set-up and served, and Fred Morse, Jason Morse, Mike Peixoto and Jim Kitsock who helped with set-up. Very special thanks to our parishioners, Carlos and Lucy Santos of Dunkin Donuts, for their continued assistance and support!

~Father Costa

Eucharistic ADORATION

©JPPC

Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said:

"A Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration is a sharing in the work of Redemption."

Please join us at **Saint Mark Church**, Friday, **August 4th**, beginning at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m. with Benediction. **Please note the revised location for summer Adoration.** Remember, as we share in the work of Redemption, so will we be rewarded with our own redemption.

For more information call Joanne Regali (508-643-3821) or Arlene Hall (508-801-2243). Please leave a message if the call is not answered immediately.

Inspiration from Pope Francis

Ah, brothers and sisters, God's face is the face of a merciful father who is always patient. Have you thought about God's patience, the patience God has with each one of us? That is God's mercy. God always has patience, patience with us; he understands us, he waits for us, he does not tire of forgiving us if we are able to return to him with a contrite heart. "Great is God's mercy," says the psalm.

Rosary for Life

The Respect Life Committee of Transfiguration of the Lord Parish is pleased to announce that every Monday we will lead a Rosary for Life at 4:00 pm, prior to the 4:30 pm daily Mass in **Saint Mark Church**. The communal Rosary is also livestreamed each week for any participants who wish to join us remotely. **Please note the revised location for the summer months.**

Prayer and Pizza

Are you looking for another way to deepen your spirituality? Do you have "knots" in your life that you need help undoing? Please join us on the third Wednesday of each month for "Prayer and Pizza." Following the 4:30 pm Mass on **Wednesday, July 19**, we together will pray the rosary, which will be offered up to Mary, Undoer of Knots (maryundoerofknots.com). Whether you pray the rosary daily or have never prayed it before, please consider joining us for "Prayer and Pizza." All are welcome! Please contact Rick Leco (508 930 9264) or Vicky Curran (508 930 3306) with any questions.



From Fr. Costa:

On Saturday, July 22, the Church celebrates the Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene. More information on Mary of Magdala may be found on other pages of this week's bulletin. Interestingly, Mary Magdalene is one of the patron saints of the Dominican Order. With our strong connection to the Order of Preachers with Fr. Ken and Fr. Gabriel, I thought I would do some further research (thank God for Google!) and came across an interesting article written by Springfield (Illinois) Dominican Sister Beth Murphy. In preparation for this reflection, I suggest you read the resurrection account from St. John's Gospel found at John 20:11-18.

"Two years ago, Pope Francis acknowledged the privileged place Mary of Magdala holds for Catholics by elevating the liturgical celebration of her life from a memorial to a feast. It was a wonderful moment for women, and in a special way for all Dominicans, members of the Order of Preachers, because we acknowledge Mary as the first preacher of the Resurrection. In her honor, here's an exploration of some strong verbs associated with this strong woman."

*The verbs associated with Mary's response to her resurrection encounter with Jesus in the Gospel of John (20:11-18) reveal the power of this strong apostolic woman. Mary **stayed**. She **wept**. She **bent** and **looked**. Then she **turned** and **announced**.*

Stayed. The Greek word used by John implies someone who is steadfast and does not waiver. John writes that the other disciples, Peter and John, returned home when they saw Jesus missing from the tomb. Mary, unswayed by the challenge, stayed.

*She planted her feet, and **wept**. She mourned fully, completely, without shame. The gospel writer says, in one translation, Mary "**bent** over into the tomb." Anyone who has ever grieved deeply understands being bent double in grief. That is where we find Mary in those painful moments when she believes "They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him."*

*Here, John beautifully weaves together the strong verbs of Mary's actions, wrapping one into the other as he moves us through her story. The verb used for **bent** also implies **looking**. It implies that one stoops in order to see, and understand—or stand under—the thing you behold. It's a fierce verb. It expresses Mary's tenacity, commitment, and desire to remain with the pain she experiences in order to understand its meaning. This difficult moment of bending, looking, and standing in the suffering requires great strength and implies great love.*

*Then Mary **turns**, twice. First, she turns **from** the empty tomb. When the angels tell her "He is not here" she knows there is nothing more for her in that place. As she turns from the tomb she finds herself facing the garden—in John the symbol of the New Creation, mirroring the Garden of Eden in which humanity rejected its destiny of wholeness. Mary's turning toward the garden signals her "yes" to the New Creation, the wholeness of life belonging to those who live in Resurrection faith.*

Next, Mary sees Jesus and mistakes him for the gardener. (Though he is, in a real sense, The Gardener!) She turns purposefully toward him when she hears him call her by name. Her one word response—"Rabbouni!"—bears the entire weight of her love, grief, joy, and amazement—and her commitment to follow the Christ.

*Her reorientation to resurrected life now complete, the Risen One commissions Mary to announce. Jesus commands "go to my brothers and tell them...." John says she "**went and announced**"—using a feminine form of the verb that appears nowhere else in the Hebrew or Christian scriptures. Scripture scholars are coming to consensus that, based on the textual evidence in this passage from John's gospel, Mary is, in every sense of the word, an apostle of Jesus, the first apostle of the resurrection."*

I think you would agree, Mary of Magdala is a most appropriate patron of the Dominicans, the Order of Preachers!

Memorial Opportunities:

Thank you for the outpouring of support and interest in sponsoring new ritual books for each of our 3 churches. Given their importance and the respect these books deserve, we are able to invest in some new editions thanks to your generosity. As of the printing deadline for this week's bulletin, there is only one ritual book that has not yet been claimed:

Lectionary, Year C (for Sacred Heart Church): \$98.00

If you would like to sponsor the purchase of this book, please contact the parish office at 508-695-6161 or stmaryna@noozi.com to make sure it is still available before sending/leaving a check. Memorial names will be inscribed on the inside cover of each book and will be recognized in an upcoming edition of the parish bulletin. We are most grateful for your kindness and generosity!

FAITH FORMATION

Director of Religious Education ~ Mrs. Elaine Corvese
508-695-3823

transfigurationreled@gmail.com

Faith Formation Program 2023-2024

Summer Office hours from July 3rd to August 9th:

**Monday and Tuesday
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Faith Formation Office hours (after August 9th):

**Monday – Thursday
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

The students currently enrolled in the Faith Formation program will be promoted to the next grade level. Parents/guardians will receive information regarding their child's grade in August 2023.

Registration for students entering first grade or are new to the program will begin on August 9th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Contact the Faith Formation office at: 508-695-3823 or transfigurationreled@gmail.com to register.

Mrs. Elaine Corvese

SAINT MARY-SACRED HEART SCHOOL - JOIN NOW!

Give the gift of a Catholic education - the faith formation and goal of creating saints is priceless!



Sydney Daniels, a graduate student in Marine Science, returns to her alma mater, Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School, to share her time and talent with the Saints of Richards Avenue. Our SMSH grads love to come back to campus and give back to the community that gave them so much. What a shining example of how a SMSH Catholic education is rooted in service. To learn more about how your student can start her/his story as a Saint, please visit our website www.smschool.com.

Transfiguration of the Lord Parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society

Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are in need or are suffering, in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul. The Society meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month in the parish hall in Saint Mary Church. Please join us!

Call for Assistance If you need assistance, please call the help line for our parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society. They can offer information about the types of assistance available. Please call 508-212-4755 for help or more information.

Knights of Columbus

Council #330 of the Knights of Columbus has been serving the Catholic Community of North Attleborough for 125 years. The Knights meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm, in the St. Mary Church Hall. Please drop by on meeting nights if you'd like to learn more about the Knights. Council #330 is committed to assisting local charities that align with the values of our Faith such as the Parish, the Parish school, and Abundant Hope. Contact Jim Schromm with any questions: jim.schromm@verizon.net.

82nd Annual Catholic Appeal Updates



82ND ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL
DIOCESE OF FALL RIVER

Thank you for your most generous support of the 2023 Catholic Appeal! In 2022, our parish contributed a total of \$103,210, an increase over 2021 of \$962.00! A final figure is not yet available for this year's appeal, but so far, our community has contributed **\$94,600.00** in 2023!

Please note, the Catholic Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts is still collecting and counting gifts received toward the 2023 Catholic Appeal. We will continue providing these updates until the books officially close on the 2023 Catholic Appeal. At that time, we will report the final total for the parish...stay tuned!

Saint of the Week: Saint Mary Magdalene

Except for the mother of Jesus, few women are more honored in the Bible than Mary Magdalene. Yet she could well be the patron of the slandered, since there has been a persistent legend in the Church that she is the unnamed sinful woman who anointed the feet of Jesus in Luke 7:36-50.

Most Scripture scholars today point out that there is no scriptural basis for confusing the two women. Mary Magdalene, that is, “of Magdala,” was the one from whom Christ cast out “seven demons” (Luke 8:2)—an indication at the worst, of extreme demonic possession or possibly, severe illness.

Writing in the *New Catholic Commentary*, Father Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P., says that “seven demons” “does not mean that Mary had lived an immoral life—a conclusion reached only by means of a mistaken identification with the anonymous woman of Luke 7:36.” In the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Father Edward Mally, S.J., agrees that she “is not...the same as the sinner of Luke 7:37, despite the later Western romantic tradition about her.”

Mary Magdalene was one of the many “who were assisting them [Jesus and the Twelve] out of their means.” She was one of those who stood by the cross of Jesus with his mother. And, of all the “official” witnesses who might have been chosen for the first awareness of the Resurrection, she was the one to whom that privilege was given. She is known as the “Apostle to the Apostles.”

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“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God”

These words are near the beginning of the eucharistic prayer, the prayer that follows the collections and the preparation of the altar and the bread and wine, and that concludes with the Great Amen, before the Our Father. What are we doing in this prayer? Much of the answer lies in the word “eucharist.” Derived from Greek, it means “thanksgiving.”

Some history of this prayer: Its roots are found in the Jewish tradition of meal blessings. As a devout Jew, Jesus would have prayed these blessings, especially at the Last Supper. Early Christians (who were Jews) used them in their celebrations known as “the breaking of bread,” when they carried out Jesus’ command to “Do this in memory of me.” Over time, references to Jesus and the meaning of his life, death, and resurrection were incorporated. Two of the nine prayers approved for use in this country date from the third and fourth centuries, and the other seven prayers are recent compositions – all have a similar internal structure. In other words, Christians have been praying this way at the eucharist ever since there were Christians!

The prayer is thanksgiving for the heart of life as Christians understand it: for all of God’s creation, and especially for the saving works of Christ. It is proclaimed over bread and wine, symbols of what is most basic, food and drink from the tables of ordinary people. In this context, when we are turned to the foundations of our life, we also petition God for the abundance promised at this table to be shared with the whole world, with the church, with all who seek God, with the dead.

The prayer is an action that everyone in the church is meant to participate in: It is not “the priest’s prayer.” This concept is new to many Catholics. From “The Lord be with you” and the responses that follow, through the Great Amen that concludes the prayer, the eucharistic prayer requires the vigorous involvement of all present. We involve ourselves fully when we join our hearts to the words sung or spoken by the priest, when we assume an attentive posture, when we put aside the missalette, when we sing the acclamations with full voice.

In the end, “eucharist” is what our life as Christians is all about. Wherever we stand, in suffering or joy or confusion or routine, our life is always to be praise, always to be thanksgiving, always to be sharing God’s abundance with all in need.

Adapted from *Preaching about the Mass*, © 1992 Archdiocese of Chicago, Liturgy Training Publications, 1800 North Hermitage Avenue, Chicago IL 60622-1101; 1-800-933-1800.

Reflections for the Week beginning Sunday, July 16, 2023

Sunday, Jul 16, 2023

Pause before speaking

Words are deeds, as theologian Peter Kreeft astutely reminds us. When we speak our thoughts into the air, we are doing something. So many words circulate in the machinery of our media that we tend to take them for granted and view them as cheap or even meaningless. But words matter. They take root in our minds and hearts, as well as in the thoughts and feelings of people who receive them from us. Before you utter the response, make the call, or hit the send key, pause to contemplate what impact your words may have on someone else.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 55:10-11; Romans 8:18-23; Matthew 13:1-23 (103). *"My word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it."*

Monday, Jul 17, 2023

Heartfelt holiness

Like any family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph experienced misunderstandings, disagreements, and hurt feelings within the family unit. Some of those experiences are told in the gospels, but there were surely others we never learned about. The Holy Family is a model for all families in the struggles and joys of family life. There are many devotional prayers to the Holy Family, including a litany and even a devotion to the hearts of the Holy Family. Most Catholics are familiar with the images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but perhaps less so with the Chaste Heart of Joseph. Consider adorning your family home with artwork of all three.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 1:8-14, 22; Matthew 10:34-11:1 (389). *"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."*

Tuesday, Jul 18, 2023

Instituting a better bedside manner

Hospitals in Rome and throughout Europe were abysmal in the 1500s, when Camillus de Lellis was admitted—twice—with an infected leg. Hospital workers were poor, often beggars and prisoners, who showed up mostly for free meals. Some even stole food from patients! Saint Camillus was so disgusted by this treatment that he got up from his bed to provide comfort—and cleanliness—to other patients. Thus his vocation was born, along with the Servants of the Sick, the religious institute Camillus founded after becoming a priest. A great Catholic tradition was likewise born: not just spiritual solace but clean and professional care as well. Visit the Catholic Health Association website to pray for hospital workers.

MEMORIAL OF CAMILLUS DE LELLIS, PRIEST

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 2:1-15a; Matthew 11:20-24 (390). *"She was moved with pity for him."*

Wednesday, Jul 19, 2023

Mercy me

Our tradition contains a variety of words to describe "missing the mark" when it comes to personal conduct: sin, transgression, and iniquity, a word used hundreds of times in scripture. Iniquity describes willful harming, where we choose to hurt or act with malice. It gets at the character or quality of our intentions. In a sense, our actions are all we really ever own. We carry them with us and we fall short at times. Thankfully, God's mercy is greater even than our iniquity. Examine your conscience, make amends

where possible, and call upon the Lord's mercy. Ask God to crown you with kindness and compassion, as today's psalm promises.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12; Matthew 11:25-27 (391).

"The Lord is kind and merciful. He pardons all your iniquities, he heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, he crowns you with kindness and compassion."

Thursday, Jul 20, 2023

Inspiration for a dangerous mission

Today's saint, Apollinaris, was a bishop during the first century of the church, a dangerous time to be a Christian. Roman authorities and others disliked the followers of Jesus for disrupting social norms and threatening a social order that gave Roman emperors God-like authority. Christianity was also a new movement, making it even more untrustworthy. Apollinaris was bishop of Ravenna, Italy, and for that public role he was savagely beaten, later dying of his wounds. His martyrdom inspired early disciples. Who inspires you to live dangerously in faith?

MEMORIAL OF APOLLINARIS, BISHOP, MARTYR

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 3:13-20; Matthew 11:28-30 (392). *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart."*

Friday, Jul 21, 2023

A beautiful work in progress

God is the creator par excellence and invites all of creation, especially human beings, to share in the gift of creating. God enables us "to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony" (Catechism §307). There is a beauty in the incompleteness or "unfinishedness" of creation. Not only does it give us the opportunity to follow God's lead, but, according to distinguished professor and theologian Sister Anne Patrick, S.N.J.M., it reveals a beauty of its own and stirs us to gratitude for creation's patient unfolding. What gifts do you find in your own acts of creating?

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 11:10—12:14; Matthew 12:1-8 (393). *"I say to you, something greater than the temple is here."*

Saturday, Jul 22, 2023

Who do you say she is?

No biblical figure is surrounded by more mystery than Mary Magdalene. Who was she, really? What we know from the texts, says Catholic writer James Carroll, is that she was a leader in the community of Jesus' followers. While the men abandoned Jesus in his hour of need, Mary was one of the women who stayed with him even through the Crucifixion. She was the first person to whom Jesus appeared after his Resurrection and the first to preach that Good News, and her status as an apostle in the early church rivaled even that of Peter. Over time, her status was questioned, her reputation tarnished. Powerful women have contended with such treatment throughout the ages. Mary Magdalene stands as a symbol for gender equity and justice as well as faithful witness.

FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE, APOSTLE TO THE APOSTLES

TODAY'S READINGS: Song of Songs 3:1-4b or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; John 20:1-2, 11-18 (603). *"On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb."*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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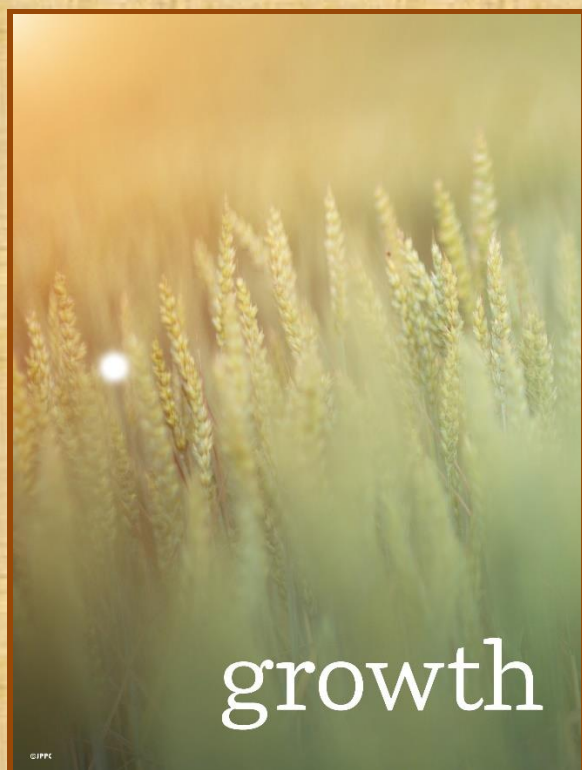
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time - July 16, 2023

First Reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

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

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.



Responsorial Psalm

R. The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

You have visited the land and watered it;
greatly have you enriched it.
God's watercourses are filled;
you have prepared the grain.

R. The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

Thus have you prepared the land: drenching its
furrows,
breaking up its clods,
Softening it with showers,
blessing its yield.

R. The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

You have crowned the year with your bounty,
and your paths overflow with a rich harvest;
The untilled meadows overflow with it,
and rejoicing clothes the hills.

R. The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

The fields are garmented with flocks
and the valleys blanketed with grain.
They shout and sing for joy.

R. The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

Second Reading

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Alleluia

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

*The seed is the word of God, Christ is the sower.
All who come to him will have life forever.*

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

† A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord.

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because *they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand*. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: *You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them.*

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

"Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Seeds of a Fruitful Harvest

In a garden shop I looked through packets of seeds. I came across some morning glories. “Morning glories!” I wondered. I didn’t know people actually planted them! I thought they just wildly wrapped around my flowers, trees, shrubs, corn stalks, tomato plants, and delicate herbs. Their roots are easy enough to pull from the ground, but you can get dizzy trying to unwrap them from hundreds of stems. They threaten to suffocate and choke out everything that grows.

Comment

There is an analogy made between the earth and us. Just as God waters the earth to make things grow, we are “watered” by God’s Word and grow in living out the Word’s meaning. God has a purpose for the words that are sent to us. According to God’s plan, we will achieve the purpose of that word. The fruit of God’s harvest is divine in human beings—God’s everlasting love.

Paul compares the work of the harvest to a mother’s labor during childbirth. The work is hard and often painful, but the end result is the joy of holding her new baby. Similarly, it takes hard work to make a crop healthy for harvest, but the conclusion is a great yield.

In the parable, Jesus describes the soil onto which the seed may fall. If it falls on the hardened path, birds may come and eat it because it is not embedded in the soil. Or it may land on rock, which has very little soil and roots cannot go deep enough. Thorns and weeds (I’m sure they were morning glories!) may come and choke out the seed’s growth. Only if the seed falls on good soil can it take hold and mature into a fruitful harvest.

Reflection

We are the soil in which God plants the seeds. Are we fertile soil or does our sinfulness or righteousness make us thorny? Are we filled with weeds of distraction and busy-ness? Paul points us in the direction of hope. His letters to the early Church tell us that our great hope and salvation rests in Christ who died for us. It is Christ who removed the thorns of sin for us.

We need to be attentive to the care of our soil. Sometimes we can do our own gardening. Other times we need the help of a gardener. And still other times, we offer nutrients to others trying to maintain a fertile soil. We are a community of believers. We all need one another’s help to ensure good soil.

Like the rain mentioned in Isaiah, which will not return to God until it has watered the earth, God’s word will not return to God void. This means it falls on fertile soil. We already know about the thorns of sin and the weeds of distraction. How will we prepare the soil today for God’s word? What action have we put off that we now must do in order for God’s word to land gently on us and move us to action?

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