

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



SEPTEMBER

27

2020

Humbly regard others as
more important than yourselves,
each looking out not
for his own interests,
but also for those of others.

Philippians 2:3-4

Saint Therese Of The Child Jesus

(1873-1897)

October 1

“The cornerstone’s dated 1872, but the stained glass is much later,” explained the pastor, astonished when his visitor accurately dated it to just before the Great Depression, explaining, “The window for the Little Flower”—Thérèse’s nickname—“gives it away.” From her canonization in 1925, her statues and windows adorn most churches where European immigrants worshiped. Entering Carmel at fifteen, victim of tuberculosis at twenty-four, Thérèse proposed her “Little Way” to sanctity: doing ordinary tasks with extraordinary love. Thus ordinary Catholics, many of whom had lost loved ones to tuberculosis, embraced her. Though she never left her cloister, this Carmelite’s spiritual communion and devoted correspondence with missionaries earned her the title Patroness of Missions. Her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, continuously in print since her death, chronicles her prayerful perseverance through doubt and caused her to be the youngest person ever named a Doctor of the Church. Countless physical healings and spiritual conversions testify to her fulfillment of her deathbed promise: “After my death, I will let fall a shower of roses. I will spend my heaven doing good upon earth!”
—Peter Scagnelli, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



Familiar Insights

Spiritual teachers tend to repeat themselves, and to repeat other teachers. Maybe there really aren’t that many different truths to tell. Just a lot of slow, sleepy human beings—like us—who need to hear the basics over and over. Consider today’s readings.

People complain God isn’t “fair,” and Ezekiel answers that God is more than fair. People choose their own fates, and people can change. Even evildoers can turn, do right, and live. “Actions speak louder than words.” A fresh new insight? Hardly.

Paul tells the Philippians that he would truly be encouraged if those who claimed to be believers would, in fact, look to others’ interests and not their own. “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” A novel idea? I don’t think so.

In Jesus’ story of the farmer and his sons, everyone knows that the one who said he wouldn’t work—but did—is way ahead of the one who said he would work—but didn’t. “Talk is cheap.” Heard that before?

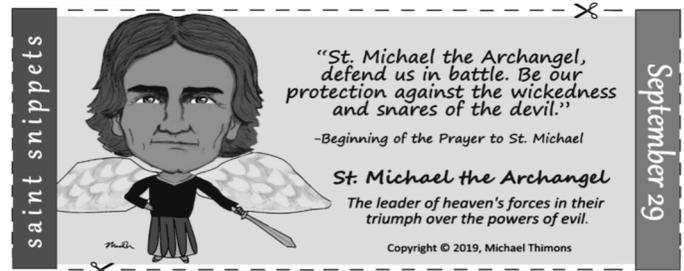
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Readings for the Week

Monday:	Jb 1:6-22; Ps 17:1bcd-3, 6-7; Lk 9:46-50
Tuesday:	Dn 7:9-10, 13-14 or Rv 12:7-12a; Ps 138:1-5; Jn 1:47-51
Wednesday:	Jb 9:1-12, 14-16; Ps 88:10bc-15; Lk 9:57-62
Thursday:	Jb 19:21-27; Ps 27:7-9abc, 13-14; Lk 10:1-12
Friday:	Jb 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5; Ps 139:1-3, 7-10, 13-14ab; Mt 18:1-5
Saturday:	Jb 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17; Ps 119:66, 71, 75, 91, 125, 130; Lk 10:17-24
Sunday:	Is 5:1-7; Ps 80:9, 12-16, 19-20; Phil 4:6-9; Mt 21:33-43

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time; World Day for Migrants and Refugees; Priesthood Sunday; Yom Kippur (Jewish day of atonement) begins at sunset
Monday:	St. Lawrence Ruiz and Companions; St. Wenceslaus
Tuesday:	Ss. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels
Wednesday:	St. Jerome; Sukkot (Jewish harvest festival) begins at sunset
Thursday:	St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus
Friday:	The Holy Guardian Angels; First Friday
Saturday:	Blessed Virgin Mary; First Saturday



Today's Readings

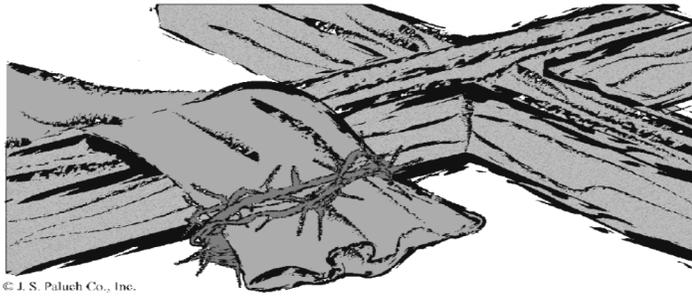
First Reading — When the wicked turn away from their wickedness they have committed and do what is right, they shall surely live (Ezekiel 18:25-28).

Psalms — Remember your mercies, O Lord (Psalm 25).

Second Reading — Consider others as better than yourselves; look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others (Philippians 2:1-11 [1-5]).

Gospel — Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you (Matthew 21:28-32).

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Twenty-sixth Sunday

In Ordinary Time

September 27, 2020

**Have in you the same attitude that is also in
Christ Jesus.**

—Philippians 2:5

Treasures From Our Tradition

The sacrament of penance has a long and difficult history. The Church sometimes struggles with how best to be faithful to the image of an all-forgiving God. Once a very public rite with publicly visible participation on the part of the penitent, it became in time a very private matter. By the fourteenth century, when a prayer of absolution and a laying on of hands was still required in sacramental confession, theologians were saying that even that was too much liturgy. All that was required was confession itself, and the sacramental words *Ego te absolvo*, or “I absolve you.”

In 1614 the Council of Florence tried to flesh out this bare skeleton, requiring that if possible the priest should wear a stole, that the confession should be in church, and that there be questions about the person’s state in life, occupation, and last confession. This is the first time the Church recommended that the penitent and priest be separated by a grill, thereby eliminating the ritual laying on of hands once so central to the sacrament, substituting the priest’s raised right hand in blessing. This is the rite that remained in force until the sacrament became the subject of very stormy debates at the Second Vatican Council, leading to a major reform in 1974 that is still only partially received.

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co

For the past several weeks, the word of God has drawn us into the mystery of mercy. Today’s readings deepen our reflection, reminding us how blessed we are to know God’s kindness and sharing practical ways to show compassion to others. The prophet Ezekiel cautions God’s chosen people, emphasizing that bad behavior naturally leads to painful consequences. The psalm responds prayerfully: “Remember your mercies, O Lord.” In this prayer, we ask for the mercy of recognizing our sins and receiving the strength to act differently. In his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul invites us into a daunting challenge of mercy: “humbly regard others as more important than yourselves.” If we scoff at Paul’s challenge as impossibly naïve, the Gospel gives us a chance to reconsider. Our natural instincts of self-preservation might reject merciful behavior initially, but like the son in today’s Gospel of mercy, we can change our minds.

Nature

The prophet Ezekiel scolds God’s chosen people for demanding more than they deserve. Acting like spoiled children, the Israelites complain when their wicked actions lead logically to negative consequences. Nature has built-in punishments for bad behavior: laziness leads to unpreparedness; overwork leads to exhaustion; overindulgence leads to poor health; violence leads to injury. The natural world brims with corrective countermeasures to our poor choices. Why is it, Ezekiel wonders, that we become upset when sin leads to predictable and natural punishments?

Supernature

Animals never object to punishment, only humans. A wounded gerbil wouldn’t shake her fist at the skies and ask, “Why me?” But as Ezekiel knows, human beings complain constantly. Humans are supposed to be more logical than animals, yet we irrationally protest natural consequences that we do not like, such as pain or death. Mysteriously, our bitterness against nature is rooted in our unique capacity for greatness. Unlike every other creature in the universe, we humans are made in the image and likeness of God. We may live in the natural world, but God calls us every minute to supernatural glory. Though we are mortal, God’s mercy has destined us for immortality. Our hearts long for perfect bliss unlike anything we will ever know on earth. No wonder we demand so much from God! Preserved for glory as we are, we experience pain when earthly life falls short of our divine expectations. Jesus shows us the antidote for that pain—service. Though we share in the kingship of Christ, we must demonstrate our royalty as Jesus does, by serving others. As Saint Paul tells us, Jesus is God, yet takes the form of a slave—our slave. The Gospel encourages us to imitate Jesus in this way. We may object to being a servant at first, and even grumble about it. But God’s strength can help us overcome natural objections and enter gracefully into our supernatural role, heirs to the kingdom of God.

Today’s Readings: Ez 18:25–28; Ps 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9; Phil 2:1–11 [1–5]; Mt 21:28–32

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