

23 August, 2026 – 21st Sunday in Ord. Time

Is 22,19-23; Rom 11,33-36; Mt 16,13-20

INTRODUCTION

A young architect was once asked what the most important part of a building was. People expected him to say the roof, the walls, or the beauty of the design. Instead, he replied, “The part nobody sees—the foundation. If that is weak, everything else eventually collapses.” Years later, after an earthquake struck his city, many impressive buildings cracked and fell, but those built firmly on solid ground remained standing. The hidden foundation made all the difference.

Today’s Gospel invites us to think about the foundation of our own lives. Jesus asks His disciples a question that is not merely theological but deeply personal: “Who do you say that I am?” It is the question that determines whether our faith is built on shifting sand or on rock.

Peter answers with courage and faith: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus then entrusts him with the keys of the Kingdom and promises that His Church will

stand firm despite storms and opposition. The Gospel reminds us that faith is not simply inherited, borrowed, or based on public opinion; it must become a personal relationship with Christ.

As we gather around this altar, we recognize that there are times when our faith becomes weak, when fear replaces trust, and when we fail to keep Christ at the centre of our lives. Let us therefore ask the Lord for mercy and forgiveness.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, yet we often build our lives on passing things rather than on You. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You entrusted the keys of the Kingdom to weak and fragile disciples, yet we have failed to open hearts through love, kindness, and faith.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You remain the rock and foundation of Your Church, yet we have doubted Your presence during the storms of life. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the merciful Lord strengthen the weak foundations of our hearts, forgive our sins, deepen our faith in Christ His Son, and lead us to stand firm upon the rock that never fails. May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

With Peter and the apostles, let us now glorify the Father who reveals His Son to humble hearts, and praise Christ who remains the rock and foundation of our faith.

COLLECT

O God, who reveal the mystery of your Son to those who place their trust in you,
grant that amid the storms and uncertainties of life
we may firmly confess with Peter
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God,
and faithfully serve your Church with hearts rooted in faith
and love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

A little boy once stood beside his grandfather on a rocky seashore watching the waves crash against the cliffs. The grandfather pointed to a lighthouse standing firmly against the storm and said, “Do you know why that lighthouse still stands after so many years? Because it is built on rock. Storms do not ask permission before they come. What matters is the foundation.”

Many years later, the grandson said that he finally understood what his grandfather meant—not when life was easy, but when illness struck his family, when friendships failed, and when faith itself was tested. Only then did he realize that the deepest question in life is this: *What is my life built upon?* Or even more personally: *Who is at the centre of my life?*

That is exactly the question at the heart of today’s Gospel. Today’s Gospel takes place at a decisive turning point in the public life of Jesus. It is rather like halftime in a football match. During halftime, the players leave the field and gather in the dressing room. The coach reviews what has

happened, prepares them for what lies ahead, and reminds them what really matters if they are to finish well.

Something similar happens in the Gospel today. Jesus withdraws with His disciples to Caesarea Philippi, in the far north of Israel, near the sources of the Jordan River. It is a quiet and lonely place, away from the crowds. It is, so to speak, the “halftime pause” of His public ministry.

Until now, the first half has looked remarkably successful. Crowds have followed Him everywhere. People have been amazed at His teaching. They have seen Him heal the sick, cleanse lepers, calm storms, cast out demons, and feed thousands with a few loaves and fish. Some even wanted to make Him king.

The first half looked triumphant.

But Jesus knows that the second half will be very different. Soon He will be rejected, misunderstood, accused, and condemned. The same crowds that once shouted “Hosanna!” will eventually cry, “Crucify Him!” The road ahead leads to the Cross.

So in that quiet place Jesus asks a question.

“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

The disciples answer: “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

These are respectful answers. They recognize Jesus as a holy man, a prophet, someone sent by God. But Jesus is not satisfied with second-hand opinions.

Then comes the personal question:

“But you... who do you say that I am?”

It is one of the most important questions in the entire Gospel.

Jesus does not ask, “What have you heard about me?” He does not ask, “What do scholars think?” or “What is popular opinion?” He asks, “Who do *you* say that I am?”

Sooner or later, every disciple must answer that question personally.

A teacher once asked a class of children, “Who is Jesus for you?” One child replied, “Jesus is like Wi-Fi.” The teacher laughed and asked, “What do you mean?” The child answered, “You cannot see Him, but if the connection

is lost, everything stops working.”

There is more wisdom in that answer than we might first imagine. Faith is not simply knowing facts about Jesus. It is living in relationship with Him.

Peter answers on behalf of the Twelve:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus rejoices. Peter has finally grasped something essential. Yet even Peter does not fully understand what kind of Messiah Jesus will be. He is still thinking of glory and success. He has not yet learned that the Messiah will save the world through suffering love.

How often we make the same mistake.

Many people are happy to follow Christ when life is going well, when prayers seem to be answered quickly, and when faith brings comfort. But what about the second half? What about when illness comes, relationships break down, disappointments arrive, or prayers seem to meet only silence?

A young man once shared how he returned to faith after

years away from the Church. His little daughter was undergoing major surgery. Sitting alone in a hospital waiting room, feeling helpless and frightened, he picked up a Bible and opened it to the words of Jesus:

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.”

He later said, “At that moment Jesus stopped being an idea and became someone real.”

That is what happened at Caesarea Philippi. The disciples were no longer dealing with theories about Jesus. They were being invited into a personal commitment.

An elderly woman once told her priest, “When I was young, I believed because my parents believed. Later I believed because my husband believed. But after he died and I sat alone in the house, I had to discover whether I truly believed.”

That too is Caesarea Philippi.

There comes a moment when borrowed faith must become personal faith.

Each of us may experience Jesus differently. Some know Him as the Good Shepherd who guides them. Others encounter Him as the Bread of Life who nourishes them. Some cling to Him as Light in darkness. Others meet Him as the compassionate friend who walks beside them through sorrow.

What matters is not simply knowing about Him but knowing Him.

Saint Paul expresses this wonder in today's second reading:

“How deep are the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!”

Even Paul recognizes that God is greater than anything we can fully comprehend. Yet this infinite God desires a personal relationship with us. He knows us by name. He invites us to trust Him.

Then Jesus introduces another powerful image:

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

Keys are symbols of trust. We do not hand our keys to

strangers. When we give someone a key, we are saying, “I trust you.”

In the first reading, the key of the House of David is placed upon Eliakim’s shoulder as a sign of authority. In the Gospel, Jesus entrusts Peter with the keys of the Kingdom. But authority in the Gospel is never about domination. It is about service. Peter is called to open doors rather than close them—opening hearts to Christ, opening access to God's mercy, opening pathways of faith.

A parish priest once told the story of a church damaged during wartime. A statue of Christ near the entrance had lost both of its hands. Some parishioners wanted to replace it, but the priest instead placed a sign beneath the statue that read:

“Christ has no hands now but ours.”

That is the mission of the Church.

Not perfection. Not prestige. But service.

Peter himself was far from perfect. The same Peter who proclaims, “You are the Christ,” will later deny Jesus three

times. Yet Jesus does not withdraw His trust.

That should encourage all of us.

The Lord has always worked through imperfect people.

A teacher once received a visit from a former student many years after graduation. The man thanked her for believing in him when nobody else did. Tears filled her eyes as she replied, "I never knew my words mattered so much."

We rarely realize how God uses us in the lives of others.

Parents hold keys that open their children to faith.

Teachers hold keys that open minds to truth. Priests hold keys that open hearts through the sacraments. Friends hold keys that open wounded lives through kindness and encouragement.

Even a simple word can unlock hope.

The Gospel therefore asks us two questions. First: Who is Jesus for me? Second: What doors is He asking me to open for others?

The Church survives not because Christians are always strong, wise, or holy, but because Christ Himself remains

the true foundation.

Storms come. Scandals come. Weakness comes.

Opposition comes.

Yet Christ remains faithful.

There is an old story about a traveler caught in a violent mountain storm. Rain lashed against him, darkness surrounded him, and he feared he would not survive the night. Then, in the distance, he saw a faint light. Following it, he arrived at a small cabin built solidly into the rock.

As he entered, exhausted and trembling, the elderly woman inside smiled and said, "Do not fear the storm outside if your shelter stands on firm ground."

That is the message of today's Gospel.

The storms of life will come. The applause of the crowd may fade. The second half of life may be harder than the first. But if Christ is truly the centre of our lives, if our faith rests on Him and not merely on circumstances, then we can stand firm.

Like Peter, may we answer from the depths of our hearts:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

And may others, seeing the strength and hope of our faith,
discover in Christ the rock beneath their own feet.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE CREDO

United with the faith of Peter and the whole Church
through the ages, let us now profess the faith that is our
rock and our hope.

PROFESSION OF FAITH (for personal meditation only)

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
who is the firm foundation beneath all creation,
whose wisdom is deeper than the oceans
and whose mercy endures through every storm of life.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
the Christ, the Son of the living God,
whom Peter confessed in faith at Caesarea Philippi.
He is the rock on which our hope stands firm,
the Good Shepherd who guides us,

the Bread of Life who nourishes us,
the Light that shines in darkness,
and the Savior who walks beside us in every trial.

I believe that He became man for our salvation,
carried the Cross in love,
died and rose again in glory,
so that no suffering, failure, or death
might separate us from the love of God.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
who reveals Christ to humble hearts,
strengthens us when faith grows weak,
and helps us say with conviction:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

I believe in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church,
built by Christ upon the faith of the apostles,
called not to seek applause from the world
but to serve faithfully with humility and courage.

I believe that the Lord entrusts to His people
the keys of compassion, mercy, truth, and hope,
so that through our words and actions

others may discover the door that leads to life.

I believe in the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead,
and the life everlasting, where every storm shall cease
and God will be all in all. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As bread and wine are brought to the altar, let us also
place before the Lord our fears, weaknesses, and
uncertainties, asking Him to strengthen our faith and make
us faithful servants of His Kingdom.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord, accept these gifts which your people offer in faith,
and through this holy sacrifice
strengthen us to confess Christ courageously before the
world, to serve your Church with humility,
and to remain steadfast upon the rock of your truth.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For in your wisdom and love
you sent your Son into the world
as the light that no darkness can overcome.
He called ordinary and fragile disciples
to share in His saving mission, and upon the faith of Peter
He built His Church as a sign of hope for all nations.
Even amid trials, weakness, and the storms of history,
you never abandon your people,
but continue to guide them by your grace,
so that all who seek you
may discover in Christ the rock that stands forever.
And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy...

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

Jesus taught us to trust the Father even in the difficult
“second half” of life. With confidence in God’s faithful love,
let us pray in the words our Savior gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days,
that, sustained by your mercy,
we may remain firm in faith amid the storms of life,
never losing trust in Christ,
the rock and foundation of our hope,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
at Caesarea Philippi you asked your disciples,
“Who do you say that I am?”
Look with compassion upon your Church
as she journeys through the difficult “second half” of
history. When we are shaken by division, scandal, fear, or

discouragement,
renew in us the faith of Peter,
so that we may never lose sight of you,
the Christ, the Son of the living God.
You entrusted your Church to fragile disciples
and built her upon the rock of faith.
Do not look upon our sins and failures,
but upon the faith that still seeks you,
the hope that still trusts you,
and the love that still longs to serve you.
Grant peace to your Church and to our hearts,
that amid the storms of this world we may stand firm in
your truth, open doors of mercy to others,
and become instruments of reconciliation and hope.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
the One whom Peter confessed as the Christ, the Son of
the living God. Happy are those who build their lives upon
Him and are called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Lord Jesus,
today You have come to us not as an idea or distant figure,
but as living Bread for our journey.
Remain with us in the storms of life.
When faith grows weak, be our strength.
When fear surrounds us, be our rock.
And may our lives help others discover
that You alone are the Christ,
the Son of the living God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Renewed by this heavenly sacrament, O Lord,
grant that we who profess with Peter
that your Son is the Christ
may remain faithful witnesses to the Gospel,
opening hearts to your mercy
and standing firm upon the foundation of faith.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord Jesus Christ,
the rock and foundation of His Church,
strengthen your faith in every trial,
guide you safely through the storms of life,
and make you faithful witnesses of His love and truth.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives built firmly on
Christ, and helping others discover in Him the rock
beneath their feet.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“The storms of life will come, but the heart that is built on
Christ will stand firm.”

24 August, 2026 – Mon.,

St. Bartholomew; Rev. 21,9-14; Jn 1,45-51

*From prejudice to encounter: coming and seeing the Lord
who already sees us*

INTRODUCTION

There is a story of a traveller who refused to stop in a small, dusty town along his journey. “There’s nothing there,” he insisted. Yet, when his car finally broke down just outside it, he had no choice but to enter. To his surprise, he found not only help, but kindness, hospitality, and friendships he never expected. What he had dismissed from a distance became a place of grace up close.

We often make quick judgments like that traveller—about places, about people, even about God. From a distance, things can seem unimportant, unworthy, or irrelevant. But distance can distort; it can hide what is real and good.

In today’s Gospel, Nathanael begins with a similar reaction: “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” It is a

question shaped by assumption and prejudice. Yet it is not the end of his story. Something in him remains open enough to accept Philip’s simple invitation: “Come and see.”

As we gather now, we might recognize that same mixture within ourselves—moments of openness, but also resistance, doubt, or quiet prejudice. And so we turn to the Lord in the penitential act, asking for the grace to come and see more clearly, and to be seen more truthfully by him.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you invite us to move beyond prejudice and fear, and to come and see your truth: Lord, have mercy.
Christ Jesus, you know us completely and still look upon us with love and mercy: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you promise that those who follow you will see greater things: Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the merciful Lord free us from the blindness of pride, soften every hardened judgment within us, and lead us from distance into a living encounter with his Son, who knows us and calls us by name.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

Having been called by the Lord who sees us with love and invites us into deeper faith, let us now lift our voices in praise and glorify God together.

COLLECT

Lord our God, you called Saint Bartholomew from doubt into faith and taught him to recognize your Son through personal encounter.

Remove from our hearts every prejudice and fear, that we may come to Christ with openness and trust, and, being known and loved by him, grow each day into deeper discipleship and faith.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

There is a simple story told of a teacher who wrote a sentence on the board and asked the class what they saw. All the students pointed out the one mistake in the sentence. No one noticed that most of it was written correctly. The teacher smiled and said, “That’s how we often see people—we focus on what is wrong and miss what is right.”

In today’s Gospel, Nathanael begins by focusing on what he thinks is “wrong”—Nazareth. “Can anything good come from there?” It sounds like a throwaway line, but it reveals something deeper: how easily we dismiss before we truly encounter. His judgment is not based on experience of Jesus, but on assumption.

Yet Philip does not argue with him. He does not try to win a debate. He simply says, “Come and see.” It is one of the

most important invitations in the Gospel. Faith is not first about argument; it is about encounter. Nathanael's turning point begins the moment he agrees to move from distance to presence.

Even more striking is what happens next. Before Nathanael can form a new opinion about Jesus, Jesus reveals that he already knows Nathanael. "I saw you under the fig tree." The Gospel suggests something profound: Nathanael is seen before he sees. He is known before he understands.

That changes everything. Nathanael moves quickly from scepticism to faith: "You are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel." What argument could not achieve, encounter accomplishes. Being known and seen by Christ opens his heart.

And yet, Jesus does not let him settle there. "You will see greater things." In other words, this moment of faith is only the beginning. The journey does not end with one insight or one experience. It deepens, widens, and continues.

There is a quiet encouragement here for all of us. We may

recognize ourselves in Nathanael—sometimes sceptical, sometimes slow to believe, sometimes shaped by our own assumptions. But the Gospel reminds us that our starting point does not have the final word. What matters is whether we are willing to "come and see."

It also reminds us of something even more reassuring: before we seek the Lord, he is already seeking us. Before we fully understand him, he already understands us. Before we see him clearly, he already sees us with love.

There is another story of a man who avoided visiting an old friend because of a misunderstanding years before. One day, he finally gathered the courage to go. When the door opened, the friend greeted him warmly, as if no time had passed. "I've been waiting for you," he said. In that moment, the man realized that the distance had only been on his side.

In much the same way, the Lord is always waiting for us—not with reproach, but with recognition. He invites us, again and again, to come and see... and promises that, if we do, we will see greater things.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we place these gifts upon the altar, let us also place before the Lord our assumptions, doubts, and fears, asking him to open our hearts to a deeper encounter with Christ who already knows and loves us.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord, accept the offerings we bring on the feast of Saint Bartholomew,
and transform us through this sacred sacrifice,
so that, leaving behind all narrow judgment and hesitation,
we may come to know your Son more deeply
and bear witness to him with sincere and faithful hearts.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For in your loving wisdom
you call men and women from doubt into faith

and from distance into communion with your Son.

In Saint Bartholomew you revealed that those who seek with sincerity will discover that they are already known and loved by Christ.

Through the witness of the Apostles,
the Church continues to invite the world
to “come and see” the goodness of the Lord,
and to behold ever greater wonders of your grace and mercy.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

Because the Father has seen us with love even before we fully turned toward him, let us pray with confidence in the words Jesus himself taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from the blindness that keeps us distant from
you and from one another.

Free us from prejudice, fear, and hardened judgment,
and graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you looked upon Nathanael with understanding and love
and drew him from doubt into faith and peace.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance
with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who knows us completely and
still calls us to come and see. Happy are those who are
invited to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

The Lord whom we receive in this Eucharist is not distant
from us. He sees us more deeply than we see ourselves.
He knows our doubts, our wounds, our hidden struggles,
and still he calls us closer.

Like Nathanael, we may have come with questions or
hesitation. Yet Christ meets us not with rejection, but with
recognition. He says to each heart: “I have seen you.”

And having encountered him here, we are invited to see
others differently too— not through prejudice or suspicion,
but through the eyes of mercy and hope.
For those who truly come and see the Lord
will begin to see the world as he does.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that through the sacred mysteries we have received
on the feast of Saint Bartholomew,
we may grow in openness to your grace
and in faithful discipleship to your Son,
who sees us with love and calls us to greater things.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and free your hearts from every
false judgment and fear. Amen.

May he help you to recognize his presence in those you
are tempted to overlook or dismiss. Amen.

And may he lead you always from doubt into deeper faith,
so that you may come and see greater things in his love
and mercy. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit,
come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by the openness of your
hearts and by the charity with which you see and welcome
others.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Before we truly see the Lord, he already sees us with
love. The question is not whether God is near, but whether
we are willing to come and see.”

25 August, 2026 – Tuesday, 21st Week in Ord. Time

2 Thess 2,1-3. 14-17; Mt 23,23-26

Keeping what is essential at the heart: justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

INTRODUCTION

A skilled watchmaker once spent weeks adjusting a single timepiece brought in for repair. He magnified every gear, every spring, and every microscopic cog. In the process, he became so absorbed in the smallest mechanisms that he forgot to attend to the shop itself. One morning, he discovered that while he had perfected one watch, several others awaiting attention had stopped entirely. The pursuit of precision had quietly eclipsed the broader task at hand. Something of this tension appears in today's Gospel, where Jesus speaks of people who "strain out gnats and swallow camels." It is a vivid image of religious practice gone out of proportion—attention lavished on the smallest details while the great matters of God's law are neglected. St Paul, in the first reading, offers a very different vision: God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ "comfort and

strengthen" us in everything good we say and do. What truly matters is not external precision for its own sake, but lives rooted in God's sustaining grace, bearing fruit in goodness, faithfulness, and love.

And so, as we gather, we become aware of those moments when our attention has been misplaced, when we have elevated what is secondary and neglected what is essential. We turn to the Lord in humility, asking for mercy for the times we have lost sight of what truly matters.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You call us to seek justice and to honour the dignity of every person: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You reveal the Father's mercy and compassion toward the weak and forgotten:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You strengthen us in faithfulness and truth, teaching us to walk humbly with God:

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, who calls us back to what is essential and heals the blindness of our hearts, forgive us for the times we have neglected justice, mercy, and faithfulness, strengthen us in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who teach us through Your Son that the weightier matters of the law are justice, mercy, and faithfulness, grant that our hearts may remain firmly rooted in Your love, so that in all we say and do we may seek what truly pleases You and serve our brothers and sisters with sincerity and compassion.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

HOMILY

A chef once prepared a banquet dish for important guests. He worked tirelessly on the garnish—meticulously carving vegetables into delicate shapes, arranging sauces into intricate patterns, and ensuring every plate looked like a work of art. Yet in his preoccupation with presentation, he left the main dish simmering too long. By the time it was served, the garnish impressed everyone, but the meal itself was overcooked and bland. What was meant to nourish became secondary to what merely impressed.

It is into a similarly distorted sense of priorities that Jesus speaks in today's Gospel. His image is deliberately humorous and unsettling: people who carefully strain out gnats while swallowing camels whole. The point is not culinary absurdity, but spiritual blindness—the capacity to obsess over minor observances while missing what is vastly more important.

Jesus names those “weightier matters” clearly: justice, mercy, and faith. Justice is giving others their due as bearers of God's image. Mercy goes further, reaching

beyond what is owed, as the father does for the prodigal son. Faith is the living relationship with God that grounds and animates both, expressed in fidelity to Him and trust in His will.

This triad echoes the prophet Micah's enduring question: what does the Lord require but "to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" Jesus stands firmly in that prophetic tradition, calling His listeners back from religious distraction to spiritual essentials.

St Paul, too, echoes this vision when he speaks of faith that expresses itself in love. Faith is never abstract; it becomes visible in justice and mercy. Without this integration, religion risks becoming fragmented—devout in appearance but empty in substance.

The challenge, then, is not to abandon detail or discipline, but to ensure they serve what is essential. When practices, debates, or devotions begin to eclipse compassion, integrity, or trust in God, something has gone off balance. Jesus is inviting a reordering of the heart.

We may recognize how easily this happens: becoming

absorbed in rules while overlooking people, or insisting on correctness while neglecting kindness. The Gospel quietly asks whether our energy is aligned with God's priorities or diverted into secondary concerns.

A parish community once spent months debating the exact arrangement of seating for liturgies and the precise wording of notices. Meanwhile, an elderly parishioner quietly stopped attending because no one had noticed she was increasingly isolated at home. When she was eventually visited, she said gently, "I stopped coming because I felt invisible." The community had been arranging the seats carefully, while someone in their midst had gone unnoticed entirely.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered with humble and faithful hearts, may teach us to place what is essential at the centre of our lives and be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord God,
accept the gifts we place upon Your altar,
and purify our hearts from all selfishness and empty
preoccupation,
so that our worship may always be joined
to lives of justice, mercy, and faithful love.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Christ our Lord.
For You have shown us in Your Son
the true path of holiness,
teaching us not merely to honour You with our lips,
but to love You through lives marked by justice, mercy, and
faithfulness.

When our hearts become distracted by lesser things,
You call us back to what endures
and strengthen us by Your grace
to live in sincerity and truth.

Through Him the angels praise Your majesty,
Dominions adore and Powers tremble before You.
Heaven and the virtues of heaven and the blessed
Seraphim
worship together with exultation.
May our voices, we pray, join with theirs
in humble praise, as we acclaim:
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say, trusting in the Father who calls us to live in
justice, mercy, and faithful love:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and free our hearts from all distractions that lead us away
from what truly matters.

Graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You taught us that true holiness is found
in justice, mercy, and faithfulness.
Look not on our failures and misplaced priorities,
but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who calls us beyond empty appearances
to lives nourished by mercy, justice, and faithful love.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

The Lord reminds us today that holiness is not found
merely in outward precision, but in hearts transformed by
grace. Nourished by the Body of Christ, may we leave
behind what is superficial and learn again to recognize
what truly matters: justice toward others, mercy toward the
weak, and faithfulness to God in all things.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the working of this heavenly gift, O Lord,
transform our hearts and renew our lives,
so that, strengthened by the Body and Blood of Christ,
we may faithfully practise justice, show mercy with
generosity, and walk before You with steadfast faith.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you steadfast in all that is good.

May He teach you to seek what is essential and to live with hearts full of justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives rooted not in appearances, but in justice, mercy, and faithful love.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

It is possible to be meticulous about small things and still neglect what matters most. Jesus reminds us today that the heart of discipleship is not external perfection, but a life shaped by justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

26 August, 2026 – Wed. 21st Week in Ord. Time

2 Thess 3,6-10. 16-18; Mt 23,27-32

INTRODUCTION

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

There is a story of a museum that acquired an old painting said to be of great value. At first glance, it appeared dull and lifeless, and many people passed it by without interest. Yet when a restorer patiently removed the layers that covered it, a hidden masterpiece slowly emerged.

The story reminds us that appearances can easily deceive. What seems beautiful on the surface may conceal emptiness within, while what appears ordinary may hold great depth and truth. Human life itself can carry this same tension between outward image and inward reality.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks strongly against hypocrisy and pretence. He warns against lives that appear righteous outwardly but lack honesty, justice, mercy, and sincerity within. God desires not a faith of appearances, but hearts transformed by truth and grace.

As we gather to celebrate this Eucharist, let us ask the

Lord to cleanse our hearts of all that is false or divided within us, so that our lives may truly reflect the faith we profess. And so, with humility, we enter into the penitential act.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you call us to worship you with sincere and undivided hearts: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you invite us to live truthfully before God and one another: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you renew us interiorly through the quiet work of your Spirit: Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God cleanse us from all pretence and hypocrisy, strengthen us in integrity of heart, heal what is divided within us, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who desire truth in the depths of the human heart,
grant that through the transforming work of your grace
our lives may reflect the sincerity of the Gospel

and our actions may flow from hearts renewed in love.

Teach us to seek not human approval
but faithfulness to your will in all things.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

There is a story of a baker who would leave his dough quietly resting overnight. By morning, what looked like a simple mixture of flour and water had transformed from within, slowly rising into something full, living, and ready to nourish others. Nothing dramatic was visible on the outside for a long time, yet the real change was happening within.

The kingdom of God often works in a similar way. What is most important is not what is immediately visible, but what is being formed in the hidden places of the heart. Jesus consistently draws attention to this interior reality, where truth and love either grow or slowly wither.

In today's gospel, Jesus confronts the religious leaders for precisely this disconnection. Their lives are carefully

arranged on the outside, yet inwardly they lack justice, mercy, and sincerity. His sharp words are not meant to condemn for the sake of rejection, but to awaken them to the truth they have been avoiding.

St Paul, in the first reading, offers a contrasting witness. He labours with his own hands so as not to burden the community, living transparently and responsibly among those he serves. His life is not a performance; it is an integrated witness where what he preaches is what he lives.

This call to integrity is not achieved by human effort alone. It requires continual conversion of heart, where motives are purified and desires are aligned with God's will. It is in this interior space that the Holy Spirit quietly works, shaping a life that becomes consistent both inside and out. We are therefore invited to examine not only what we do, but why we do it. The danger Jesus points out is not simply wrongdoing, but the subtle drift into living for appearance, approval, or status rather than truth. Authentic discipleship begins when the heart is allowed to be seen before God as

it truly is.

There is a story of a man who spent years renovating his home. He polished the façade, replaced the windows, and kept everything looking impressive from the street, yet he neglected the foundations and the hidden structural damage beneath.

Eventually, cracks began to appear in the walls he had proudly displayed. What looked strong and beautiful could no longer hold together, because what was unseen had been ignored for too long. It became clear that no exterior beauty could compensate for interior weakness.

And so, like that house, our lives are called to be rebuilt from within, where truth is stronger than appearance and love is more than display. Only then do we become what God intends us to be—people whose outward lives reflect an inner reality shaped by grace.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that these gifts we offer with sincere hearts
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord God,
accept these offerings we place before you,
and purify our hearts through this sacred mystery,
so that our worship may be marked not by outward display
but by genuine faith, humility, and love.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For you look not only upon outward actions
but upon the hidden intentions of the heart.
Again and again you call your people
from lives of pretence into the freedom of truth,
teaching us through your Son
that authentic holiness is formed within
through justice, mercy, sincerity, and love.
In Christ, you reveal the beauty of lives
shaped quietly by grace and integrity,

and through the Holy Spirit
you renew your Church from within.
And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Saviour's command and formed by the truth that
comes from God, we dare to say:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from the temptation to live only for appearance
or human approval.
Grant us hearts that are honest before you
and lives rooted firmly in truth and love,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught us that true holiness comes from within
and that peace is born from hearts reconciled with God.
Look not on our failures and inconsistencies,
but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her
peace and unity in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who comes to renew us from within
and to make our lives a true reflection of his grace.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

The Lord has nourished us with the Bread of Life.
What God begins quietly within us, he slowly transforms
through grace.
May this Eucharist strengthen us to live with integrity of
heart, so that our outward actions may faithfully reflect the
love and truth growing within.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received the sacrament of salvation,
we pray, O Lord,
that through the power of this Eucharist
you may continue to renew our hearts
and make our lives sincere witnesses to the Gospel.
May what we celebrate outwardly in faith
become ever more deeply rooted within us in truth and
charity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord purify your hearts in his truth,
strengthen you in sincerity and love,
and help your lives reflect the grace you have received.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord
by lives marked not by appearance alone
but by integrity, truth, and love.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

God is less concerned with how impressive we appear outwardly than with who we are becoming within.

A heart quietly transformed by grace will eventually shape a life that reflects truth, sincerity, and love.

27 August, 2026 – Thursday, St. Monica

1 Cor 1,1-9; Mt 24,42-51

INTRODUCTION

There is a story of a night security guard in a large museum who became so used to quiet evenings that he slowly relaxed his attention. The silence of the halls convinced him that nothing important could happen. Yet one unexpected alarm reminded him that vigilance is necessary precisely when everything appears calm and ordinary.

Our spiritual lives can become similar. We may assume that faith can remain alive without attention, prayer, or care. Yet the Lord continues to come to us in hidden ways—in daily duties, relationships, moments of prayer, and opportunities to love.

Today's readings invite us to remain awake in faith. St Paul reminds the Corinthians that believers strengthen one another through encouragement and fidelity, while Jesus calls his disciples to be servants who remain ready and trustworthy.

As we honour St Monica, who persevered patiently in prayer and hope, let us now acknowledge the times we have grown inattentive to God's presence and ask for his mercy and forgiveness.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you call us to remain watchful and faithful in every season of life: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you strengthen us through the faith and encouragement of one another: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you teach us to serve with perseverance and love while we await your coming: Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us the times we have grown careless in faith, inattentive to his presence, and indifferent in love; may he strengthen us in vigilance, perseverance, and mutual encouragement, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who kept St Monica steadfast in prayer and patient in hope, grant that your Church may remain awake in faith, faithful in service,
and constant in encouraging one another along the path of holiness.

May we persevere with hearts attentive to your presence until the day we rejoice in your kingdom.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

There is a story of a lighthouse keeper stationed on a rugged coastline who understood that his task was not dramatic but essential. Night after night, he tended the lamp, trimmed the wick, and ensured the light remained steady, even when no ships were visible on the horizon. He once said that the hardest nights were not the stormy ones, but the calm ones, when he was tempted to think his vigilance no longer mattered.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of a servant entrusted with responsibility while the master is away. The challenge is not the absence of the master, but how one lives in that absence—whether with fidelity or forgetfulness. The call is clear: “Stay awake, because you do not know the hour.”

Paul, in the first reading, shows us what such wakefulness looks like in the life of the Church. He gives thanks for the community and acknowledges how their faith strengthens him in his own struggles. Even the apostle depends on the faithfulness of others.

This mutual support reveals something profound: faith is never purely individual. We hold one another up, sometimes without realizing it, and we are held up in turn. The Church becomes a network of encouragement where vigilance is shared.

Paul's prayer for the Corinthians—“May the Lord strengthen you and confirm you in holiness”—is not just a wish but a recognition that perseverance in faith requires grace and community.

Jesus, in the Gospel, warns against the servant who

becomes careless because delay creates illusion. Time can dull expectation, and familiarity can weaken urgency. The danger is not rebellion but indifference.

Yet vigilance in the Gospel is not anxious waiting; it is faithful service. To be ready is to be found doing what love requires in the present moment, however ordinary it may seem.

St Monica, whose memory we honour, embodies this patient vigilance in prayer. She waited not passively but faithfully, trusting that God was at work even when change seemed distant.

There is a story of a young apprentice blacksmith who was instructed by his master to keep the forge burning through the night. At first, he thought it was unnecessary, imagining that work only mattered during the hours of production. But as the night deepened, he learned that the fire was not merely a tool—it was the heart of everything. If it went out, nothing could be formed in the morning. So he stayed, feeding the flame, learning that faithfulness often looks like quiet endurance when no one is watching.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as we place these gifts upon the altar, the Lord may keep the flame of faith alive within us, making us vigilant servants and faithful witnesses ready for his coming.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive, O Lord,
the offerings we bring before you
as we celebrate the memory of St Monica.
May these sacred gifts strengthen us in perseverance,
deepen our care for one another,
and keep our hearts watchful in faithful service
until the coming of your Son.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For you call your people to live with hearts awake,
faithful in love and steadfast in hope.

Through your grace,
you strengthen us in the communion of the Church,
so that we may encourage one another
and persevere in holiness while awaiting the coming of
your Son.

In St Monica you give us a shining example
of patient vigilance and trusting prayer,
for she remained faithful through years of waiting,
confident that your mercy never fails.

And so, with Angels and Saints,
we praise you, as without end we acclaim:
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father who keeps us
steadfast in faith and united in mutual love:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and strengthen us whenever we grow weary or careless in
faith.

Keep alive within your Church the spirit of vigilance, hope,
and faithful service,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now
and for ever.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught your disciples to remain faithful and ready in
love.

Look not on our failures and indifference,
but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance
with your will.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who strengthens us
to remain faithful and watchful in love.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Faithfulness is often quiet and unseen.

Like the lighthouse keeper tending the lamp through the
night, or the apprentice guarding the fire until morning,
discipleship is sustained in ordinary perseverance.

The Lord asks not for dramatic achievements,
but for hearts that remain awake,
serving with love until he comes.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the working of this heavenly sacrament, O Lord,
strengthen our hearts in perseverance and vigilance,
so that, nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ,
we may encourage one another in faith
and remain faithful in every duty entrusted to us.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord keep the flame of faith alive within your hearts. Amen.

May he strengthen you to remain watchful, faithful, and steadfast in love. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives of faithful vigilance, mutual encouragement, and loving service.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Faith is kept alive not by dramatic moments, but by steady vigilance, quiet perseverance, and the encouragement we give one another each day.

28 August, 2026 – Friday, St. Augustine

1 Cor 1,17-25; Mt 25,1-13

INTRODUCTION

There is a story of a man who went to the airport late at night to collect a close friend arriving on a delayed international flight. The announcement kept changing: first a short delay, then a longer one, then silence. Yet he stayed. Others in the waiting hall gradually left, tired and impatient, but he remained seated, occasionally checking the arrivals screen, refusing to assume the worst.

When the friend finally appeared—hours later—there was no complaint, only relief and quiet joy. The waiting had been long, but it had not been empty. It had been filled with expectation, loyalty, and trust that the arrival would eventually happen.

Such experiences of waiting and fidelity quietly prepare us for the deeper spiritual truth of our lives: we are always waiting for the Lord who comes in unexpected hours and unexpected ways. Yet so often our waiting grows tired, our trust weakens, and our hearts grow dim.

And so, as we gather at the altar today, we acknowledge those moments when our lamps have gone dim and our waiting has lacked love. We turn to the Lord and ask for mercy...

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you call us to keep watch with faithful hearts and burning lamps: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you sustain us with the oil of your grace when our strength grows weak: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you come to meet us in unexpected hours and invite us into your joy: Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God have mercy on us, strengthen the failing flame of faith within us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who led Saint Augustine from restless searching into the peace of your truth,
grant that we who await the coming of your Son
may keep the lamp of faith burning through perseverance,
prayer, and love.

Strengthen us when the journey is long, and teach us to remain faithful in seasons of waiting, so that we may be found ready to enter the joy of your kingdom.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

There is a story of a group of scouts preparing for an overnight hike in the bush. Their leader kept repeating the same simple motto: “Be prepared.” Some took it seriously—packing extra torches, matches, and water. Others assumed nothing would go wrong and travelled light. When night fell earlier than expected, and the path

became difficult to read, it became clear who had listened and who had merely heard.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of wise and foolish bridesmaids, all waiting for the bridegroom, but not all prepared for his delay. The difference between them is not desire but readiness—not the wish to meet him, but the preparation to sustain that meeting when the hour is unexpected.

St Paul, in the first reading, unsettles our assumptions when he reminds us that God's wisdom often appears as foolishness to the world. The cross itself looks like failure, yet it is the very place where divine love is revealed. The wise in God's eyes are not those who appear successful, but those who are faithful.

The oil in the lamps of the wise bridesmaids is not something dramatic. It is quiet, accumulated fidelity—daily acts of love, patience, prayer, forgiveness. It is the kind of life that does not run on enthusiasm alone, but on a deeper endurance rooted in God.

St Augustine understood this tension deeply. He searched

for meaning in many places before discovering that his heart was restless until it rested in God. His conversion was not a single moment of brilliance but the slow recognition that grace had been sustaining him all along, even in his wandering.

The delay of the bridegroom in the parable is not accidental; it is formative. It reveals what kind of love endures when God does not arrive on our schedule. The question is not whether we begin the journey with lamps lit, but whether we remain faithful when the night is longer than expected.

To keep the lamp burning is to live a Eucharistic life—continually receiving Christ's presence in word and sacrament, in the poor and the ordinary, in moments of clarity and in seasons of dryness. The oil is replenished not by urgency, but by abiding.

There is a story of a lighthouse keeper on a rugged coast who, night after night, tended the great lamp. Most of the time there were no ships in sight, only darkness and wind. Yet he kept the flame steady, knowing that somewhere, at

some unknown hour, a vessel would depend entirely on that light to find safe passage. When at last a ship appeared on the horizon, it was the faithful flame that guided it home.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts, offered with hopeful and watchful hearts, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord God,
accept these offerings of your people
and let this Eucharist replenish the oil of faith within us.
As Saint Augustine learned to rest in you alone,
may we also learn perseverance in prayer, constancy in love, and readiness for the coming of Christ, your Son.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in your wisdom you teach us
that the passing glory of this world cannot satisfy the
human heart.

You called Saint Augustine from restless wandering
into the light of your truth
and taught him that only in you do we find lasting peace.

In your Son, crucified and risen,
you reveal a wisdom the world cannot understand:
that faithful love is stronger than power,
and patient endurance richer than earthly success.
You call your Church to keep watch through the long night
of history, with lamps burning brightly through prayer,
mercy, and steadfast hope.

And so, with Angels and Saints, we proclaim your glory,
as with one voice we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

With lamps of faith kept burning by the grace of Christ, let us pray with confidence to the Father who never abandons those who wait for him:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may remain steadfast in faith and patient in hope
as we await the blessed coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you told your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.
In the long nights of uncertainty and waiting, keep the lamp of your Church burning with steadfast faith and hopeful love. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who strengthens the weary and fills the lamps of the faithful with the oil of grace.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

The wise bridesmaids carried enough oil not only for the beginning of the night, but for its long hours. In the Eucharist, Christ himself becomes the oil that sustains us. He nourishes the hidden faithfulness that no one sees—the quiet endurance of prayer, forgiveness, patience, and hope. Like the lighthouse keeper tending the flame through darkness and storm, we are called to remain faithful even when the night seems long. Christ does not abandon those who wait for him; he comes to meet them with joy.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord our God, through this holy sacrament
you have renewed us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation. May this Eucharist keep alive within us the flame of faith, so that, persevering in love and watchfulness, we may be ready to welcome Christ when he comes.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord strengthen your hearts in every time of waiting. Amen.

May he keep the lamp of faith burning brightly within you through prayer, love, and perseverance. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, keeping your lamps burning brightly as you await the coming of the Lord.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Faith is not only about beginning well, but about remaining faithful when the night grows long. The oil that keeps the lamp burning is found in daily prayer, quiet endurance, acts of mercy, and constant communion with Christ.

29 August, 2026 – Saturday, 21st Week in Ord. Time

Beheading of St. John the Baptist

Jer 1,17-19; Mk 6,17-29

INTRODUCTION

There is a story told of a young engineer working for a large construction firm. During a routine inspection, she discovered that some key safety standards had been quietly ignored in order to reduce costs and speed up completion. When she raised the issue, she was told—very politely but very firmly—to “leave it alone if she wanted a future in the company.” She went home that evening carrying a heavy silence, torn between security and integrity, between her livelihood and what she knew to be right.

After a restless night, she returned to work and insisted once more that the defect be reported. The response was swift: she was sidelined, her competence questioned, her “team spirit” criticised. Yet the fault was eventually corrected, and lives—she would later learn—were quietly saved. Truth had come at a cost, but silence would have cost more.

Her story touches something deeply human within us all: the

pressure not to speak when speaking is inconvenient, and the temptation to remain quiet when truth demands courage. This struggle appears not only in public life, but also in our families, friendships, workplaces, and within our own conscience.

As we honour the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, we recognise the times we have chosen comfort over courage, silence over truth, and appearance over integrity. Trusting in the mercy of Christ, we now prepare ourselves for the penitential act.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You are the faithful witness who stood firm in the truth even when rejected and opposed:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You call us to walk in integrity and not to compromise with fear or falsehood: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You are the light no darkness can overcome, strengthening those who remain faithful under pressure:

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us the times we have failed to stand for what is right, strengthen us to live with courage and integrity, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who willed that Saint John the Baptist should go ahead of your Son both in his birth and in his death, grant that, as he courageously gave his life for truth and justice, we too may remain faithful to the Gospel in moments of pressure, fear, and compromise.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

A man once stood in a courtroom as the key witness to a crime he had seen with his own eyes. Days before his testimony, he was visited by strangers who warned him to “remember his family” when speaking in court. When the moment came, the room fell silent. Every eye watched as he stepped forward, knowing that a single sentence could change the course of the trial—and perhaps his life.

In today’s Gospel, John the Baptist stands in a similar place of moral clarity, though not in a courtroom but before the conscience of a king. The red thread running through this feast is simple yet demanding: truth that refuses to be silenced, even at great cost. John speaks what is right before God, even when it unsettles Herod’s comfortable arrangement with sin.

John is not driven by anger or ambition. He speaks because truth has taken hold of him. Like the courtroom witness, he knows that silence would be easier, safer, more acceptable. Yet he chooses to stand in the light rather than retreat into compromise.

Herod, on the other hand, is a man divided. He recognises goodness in John, even listens to him with interest, yet remains trapped by image, fear, and pride. His promise at the banquet becomes a chain he cannot break. In him we see how weakness, when unguarded, can become complicity in injustice.

Herodias embodies a different darkness: not hesitation, but resentment hardened into revenge. Truth does not merely disturb her—it threatens her self-image. And so it must be removed. Between fear and fury, innocence is sacrificed. This is why the story is not simply about one execution in an ancient palace. It reveals a pattern that repeats whenever truth becomes inconvenient. The voices may change, the settings may differ, but the tension remains: whether we will stand with what is right, or quietly allow it to be pushed aside.

And yet, even in prison, John remains free in a deeper sense. His voice may be confined, but his fidelity is not. He becomes, as Jesus later calls him, a burning and shining lamp—light that no dungeon can extinguish.

We, too, are drawn into this same struggle. There are moments when truth is gentle and welcomed, and moments when it is costly and resisted. The Gospel does not ask us to seek conflict, but it does ask us not to abandon integrity when pressure rises.

In the end, the courtroom falls silent as the witness completes his testimony. He does not know what will follow, only that he has spoken what is true. And long after the verdict is delivered, those who heard him remember not the threats he faced, but the courage with which he stood.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as we place these gifts upon the altar, the Lord may also receive our desire to live truthfully and faithfully, even when discipleship demands courage and sacrifice.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Through these offerings which we bring to you, O Lord, grant that we may learn from Saint John the Baptist to honour the truth with steadfast hearts and to offer ourselves faithfully in the service of your Kingdom. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For in Saint John the Baptist, martyr and prophet, you reveal the courage of those who place truth above comfort and fidelity above fear.

He spoke with integrity before earthly power, preferring imprisonment and death to silence in the face of wrongdoing. In him you show your Church that no darkness can overcome the light of a conscience formed by your word, and that those who remain faithful to you

bear witness to a freedom no earthly force can destroy.
And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to pray for the courage to remain faithful to truth
and to trust the Father who strengthens His children in
every trial:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant
peace in our days, that, strengthened by your mercy, we
may be freed from fear, compromise, and discouragement
as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our
Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you remained faithful to the Father's
truth even when faced with rejection and suffering. Look
not on our weakness and hesitation, but on the faith of
your Church, and graciously grant her the peace and
courage to stand firmly in integrity and justice in every age.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who strengthens the
hearts of those who remain faithful in truth and love.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

John the Baptist lost his voice before the world, yet his
witness still speaks through the centuries. The courage
born of truth cannot be buried by fear or silenced by power.
In this Eucharist, Christ strengthens us to live with
integrity—not loudly or harshly, but faithfully. The Lord
does not ask us to seek conflict, but He does ask us never
to abandon what is right when pressure rises.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, O Lord, as we celebrate the heavenly banquet in memory of Saint John the Baptist, that we may remain steadfast in truth, courageous in conscience, and faithful in bearing witness to the Gospel in our daily lives.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord strengthen you with the courage of Saint John the Baptist, that you may remain faithful to truth even in moments of pressure and fear. Amen.

May He grant you integrity of heart,
wisdom in your choices, and peace in every trial. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives marked with truth, courage, and integrity.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Truth may demand courage, but silence in the face of what is right always costs more.”