

2014

- Well...this is the last Sunday before Lent begins this Wednesday—Ash Wednesday. Be sure to grab a bulletin for the schedule.
- Except on feasts or solemnities, no more Gloria after today. Neither an alleluia until the Easter Vigil.
- Back to violet—the color of penitence. No flowers except on Laetare Sunday—the 4th Sunday of Lent, and on feasts and solemnities...because it's “out to the desert” we go to accompany Our Lord for forty days.
- And, of course, remember that Ash Wednesday is the first of only two fast days during the year, and each Friday during Lent is a day of abstinence from meat. See the bulletin for details and a full Lenten schedule.
- Why do we fast and abstain? For penance, yes...but also to remind us of the temporary nature of the material world. We eat, and are hungry again...we drink, but thirst again.
- But...if we consume what God gives us, Jesus assures us: *“I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.”* (John 6:35 RSV)
- Not only to receive the Eucharist to give us strength, but to drink His Word—Himself—which is truth.
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- In these ways, and through our other Lenten observances such as Stations of the Cross on Fridays, missions, speakers, etc., we renew ourselves communally to walk with Christ more closely during our lives...as we anticipate His saving sacrifice upon the cross and His resurrection to life on the 3rd day at Easter.
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- Our readings focus on one of the things that we find it hardest to do: To trust in God unconditionally. To *“let go, and let God”*, as the saying goes.
- Jesus tells us today: *“No one can serve two masters—God and mammon...and He seems to place the things of the world and God almost in opposition.*

2014

- Because while creation is good, our love of created things over love of the Creator is not. This is idolatry.
- The true Christian lives in the world and use the things of the world, without living FOR the world.
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- This is why simplicity and poverty is stressed in the scriptures...to help keep us from the worship of the created rather than worship of the Creator, and to love our neighbor more than “stuff”.
- We see this theme all through scriptures.
- We have Jesus’ Word AND example...God become man...born in a stable...working as a carpenter...sweating, bleeding, callouses and blisters...having “*nowhere to lay his head.*” (Mat 8:20)
- Then John the Baptist, whom Jesus testifies that there is no man greater than...living in absolute poverty and simplicity...his only concerns with God and his fellow man.
- All through the Bible in our Church’s history: Elijah, Joseph, Mother Teresa...St. Elizabeth, St. Francis...Our Blessed Mother...virtually all the saints lived following simplicity and detachment from things...knowing that they were IN the world, but not to be OF the world.
- We Christians are sojourners through the world, but we are meant to belong to Heaven
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- We are to be like soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines on deployment: we have a mission and duty to perform where we are, but our thoughts never stray far from the joys of home.
- No matter what they are doing, everything will be dropped when they hear those blessed words: “Mail call!” Reminders of home.
- The scriptures, the teaching of the Church, are our “letters from home”...reminders of the joys of our eternal home.
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- I recently read of a survey about happiness. Material things which are universally critical to happiness are food, clothing and decent housing or shelter, and family/friends.

- After that, other acquired things brought only minimal increases in the degree of happiness. They might bring an immediate thrill, but certainly no lasting joy.
- But much joy and fulfillment was attained in helping others also acquire those critical things necessary for material contentment.

- Jesus tells us that we cannot serve both God and mammon—God and the material—for love of the material will lead us away from God.
- Thus the author of the book of Proverbs prays to God: “...give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ or lest I be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.” (Prov 30:8-9)
- Yes, you need to be able to take care of the needs of your families.
- But whence do God blessings come? From selfish hoarding and accumulating “stuff”, or from generosity in giving to those in need?
- So many opportunities! From the Rice Bowl program we have during lent which helps the poor, to national and international efforts to help those in need, to our Christian Concern Committee collection which we have today which helps the needy with food, rent, medical and utilities...to even buying a pair of shoes for a needy kid down the block.
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- We read in the psalms: “*I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever giving liberally and lending, and his children become a blessing.*” (Psa 37:25-26)
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- How much do we need?
- Scripture tells us: “*The essentials for life are water and bread and clothing and a house to cover one's nakedness.*” (Sir 29:21-23). Hmmm...just like that survey I told you about.

- I would add “*a church for sacraments and worship*”. These are what we ask when we pray: “*Give us this day our daily bread...*” Everything else is “*gravy*”
- We are not required to live in dire poverty, but we ARE required to live in a spirit of generosity and charity of our excess.
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- We are warned against greed and love of wealth:
 - “*Many have come to ruin because of gold...It is a stumbling block to those who are devoted to it....*” (Sir 31:5-7)
 - “*...the LOVE of money is the root of all evils...*” (1Tim 6:10)
 - “*Keep your life free from love of money*” (Heb 13:5)
 - And Jesus himself says: “*...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.*” (Mat 19:24)
- Popes, bishops, saints...and God!...tells us this. When will we finally believe it?
- I know... “*But, but but...!*” Yet Jesus assures us to trust in God... as we hear through Isaiah today: “*Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.*”
- So—dare to trust Jesus. Dare to be generous to those in need.
- We are at the fork in the road. On one side is the wide, easy and much-traveled road of mammon and the world. On the right: a narrow gate, the rocky and difficult path of Jesus.
- An easy road that leads to nowhere is no road at all.
- So...will we choose our road by the ease of travel...or will we choose our road because of where it leads?
- And so we recall Robert Frost:
 - *I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 82

Reading 1 [IS 49:14-15](#)

Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me;
my LORD has forgotten me."
Can a mother forget her infant,
be without tenderness for the child of her womb?
Even should she forget,
I will never forget you.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 62:2-3, 6-7, 8-9](#)

R/ (6a) **Rest in God alone, my soul.**
Only in God is my soul at rest;
from him comes my salvation.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
my stronghold; I shall not be disturbed at all.
R/ **Rest in God alone, my soul.**
Only in God be at rest, my soul,
for from him comes my hope.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
my stronghold; I shall not be disturbed.
R/ **Rest in God alone, my soul.**
With God is my safety and my glory,
he is the rock of my strength; my refuge is in God.
Trust in him at all times, O my people!
Pour out your hearts before him.
R/ **Rest in God alone, my soul.**

Reading 2 [1 COR 4:1-5](#)

Brothers and sisters:
Thus should one regard us: as servants of Christ
and stewards of the mysteries of God.
Now it is of course required of stewards
that they be found trustworthy.
It does not concern me in the least
that I be judged by you or any human tribunal;
I do not even pass judgment on myself;
I am not conscious of anything against me,
but I do not thereby stand acquitted;
the one who judges me is the Lord.
Therefore do not make any judgment before the appointed time,
until the Lord comes,
for he will bring to light what is hidden in darkness

and will manifest the motives of our hearts,
and then everyone will receive praise from God.

Gospel [MT 6:24-34](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“No one can serve two masters.
He will either hate one and love the other,
or be devoted to one and despise the other.
You cannot serve God and mammon.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life,
what you will eat or drink,
or about your body, what you will wear.
Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?
Look at the birds in the sky;
they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns,
yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
Are not you more important than they?
Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?
Why are you anxious about clothes?
Learn from the way the wild flowers grow.
They do not work or spin.
But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor
was clothed like one of them.
If God so clothes the grass of the field,
which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow,
will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?
So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’
or ‘What are we to drink?’ or ‘What are we to wear?’
All these things the pagans seek.
Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given you besides.
Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.
Sufficient for a day is its own evil.”