

- First of all, a very happy Mothers' Day to all you moms out there. Thank you for our lives!...and on top of that, for the gentle and attentive care and the sacrifices you make for your children.
- We all ought always to remember those verses in the book of Sirach: *“With all your heart honor your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that through your parents you were born; and what can you give back to them that equals their gift to you?”* (Sirach 7:27-28)
- So let us cherish our mothers today...and any faults or failings they may have or have had, remember the tenderness with which they hold us in their hearts.

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- Speaking of mothers, this weekend also marks the 100th anniversary of the first apparition of our Blessed Mother at Fatima, known now under the name of Our Lady of Fatima, and Fatima is one of the few approved Marian apparitions of the Church—deemed “worthy of belief” by all bishops of Fatima since then.
 - Pope Francis canonized two of the three visionaries this weekend—Francisco and Jacinta—and the best known visionary (Lucia) will very likely be canonized in the future.
 - Francisco and Jacinta died only a year after the visions—as Mary had told them—but Lucia died only in 2005, and so her beatification and canonization processes are ongoing.
 - Mary’s message: Primarily repentance and acts of penance, and prayers and sacrifices for sinners—especially the daily rosary.
 - She especially mentions doing acts of reparation in memory of her Immaculate Heart...as she beheld Jesus upon the cross, as with any mother her child’s sufferings became her own sufferings as well...magnified by a mother’s love—for Him, and for us.

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- Now, in our first reading today, I always chuckle a bit when we read that last line: *“...even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith”*. About time!

- But, of course, St. Luke (the author of Acts) was referring to the Jewish priests—likely Levites in particular.
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- We also read: “*As the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.*”
- Huh; disagreements among the faithful. Who would’ve thunk it?
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- The word “Hellenist”, by the way, is from the name of Greece, called “Hellas”, which itself comes from the name of a Greek mythological warrior named Hellen (with two l’s, not like Helen of Troy), whose sons supposedly were fathers of the Greek tribes...
- ...like Israel being named after the man Israel...and the people called *Israelites* in the past, and *Israelis* even today.
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- Because of the conquests of Alexander a few hundred years before, Greek was the *lingua franca* of much of the Middle East at the time.
- Jews who lived outside of Israel often spoke Greek rather than Hebrew or Aramaic, and thus they were called “Hellenists”...and Israelite Hebrews looked down on them.
- And as Hellenist Jews made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, many converted to the new Christian religion.
- The mentioned “daily distribution” was food for poor widows who had no relatives to help support them.
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- But...people being people, the native Hebrew converts to Christianity looked down on the Hellenist converts and did not assist their widows adequately.
- And so pride and arrogance and prejudice—those scourges of mankind—were already worming their way even into the new faith based on love and charity.

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- Now the apostles had more important things to do than sort out squabbles, so they had the community pick out seven Hellenist men to ensure equity in the distribution.
- Then the apostles “*laid hands on them*”...*ordained* them...not primarily for preaching, but for service to the community. And that remains deacons’ primary role even today.

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- Now St. Peter in our second reading focuses on an extremely important, but often taken for granted, aspect of our faith: the *common*, or “*baptismal*”, priesthood of all Christians—a gift from God given through baptism itself.
 - Baptism is that gateway to the sacraments, initiating us into the Church, the Body of Christ ...a birth from death into spiritual life with Jesus and communion with God.
 - As Jesus said, “*Truly...I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” (John 3:5-6 RSV)...and we see how the apostles emphasized baptism in the Acts of the Apostles.

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- A priest’s function is to offer sacrifice and worship to God—for himself and for the people...sacrifice in thanksgiving for gifts received, and also for reparation for offenses against God and our fellow man—our “sins”.
- And as all the baptized are thus “priests” in the common priesthood, all are called to that responsibility. Indeed, that is the greatest service we do for love of God and neighbor—assisting the world with our prayers and our personal sacrifices.
- How appropriate to remember that this weekend as we celebrate Our Lady of Fatima, who asked us to concentrate on that very reparation and life of prayer.

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- And it is our participation in the Mass and in the Eucharist which is the absolute pinnacle of worship, and thus it is the most important thing we do in our lives—for it is participation in that perfect sacrifice of Christ. Nothing can remotely compare with the Mass...so much so that neglect of our weekly duty of assisting at the Sunday Mass is serious and grave sin.
- And so...let us remember our privilege to share in this sacrifice of praise of God and the forgiveness of sins...and never neglect this great charge laid upon us.
- The letter to the Hebrews urges us: “...*let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...*” (Hebrews 10:24-25 RSV)
- ...for Jesus tells us: “*For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst.*” (Matthew 18:20)

[Acts 6:1-7](#)

As the number of disciples continued to grow,
the **Hellenists** complained against the Hebrews
because their widows
were being neglected in the daily distribution.
So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said,
“It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table.
Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men,
filled with the Spirit and wisdom,
whom we shall appoint to this task,
whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer
and to the ministry of the word.”
The proposal was acceptable to the whole community,
so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit,
also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas,
and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism.
They presented these men to the apostles
who prayed and laid hands on them.
The word of God continued to spread,
and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly;
even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

[Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (22) **Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Exult, you just, in the LORD;
praise from the upright is fitting.
Give thanks to the LORD on the harp;
with the ten-stringed lyre chant his praises.

R. **Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Upright is the word of the LORD,
and all his works are trustworthy.
He loves justice and right;
of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. **Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him,

upon those who hope for his kindness,
To deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

or:

R. Alleluia.

[1 Pt 2:4-9](#)

Reading 2

Beloved:

Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings
but chosen and precious in the sight of God,
and, like living stones,

let yourselves be built into a spiritual house
to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices
acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For it says in Scripture:

*Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion,
a cornerstone, chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in it shall not be put to shame.*

Therefore, its value is for you who have faith, but for those without faith:

*The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone, and
A stone that will make people stumble,
and a rock that will make them fall.*

They stumble by disobeying the word, as is their destiny.

You are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood,
a holy nation, a people of his own,
so that you may announce the praises” of him
who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

[Jn 14:1-12](#)

Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled.

You have faith in God; have faith also in me.

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.

If there were not,

would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come back again and take you to myself,
so that where I am you also may be.
Where I am going you know the way.”
Thomas said to him,
“Master, we do not know where you are going;
how can we know the way?”
Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.
If you know me, then you will also know my Father.
From now on you do know him and have seen him.”
Philip said to him,
“Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.”
Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you for so long a time
and you still do not know me, Philip?
Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.
How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?
Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?
The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own.
The Father who dwells in me is doing his works.
**Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me,
or else, believe because of the works themselves.**
Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever believes in me will do the works that I do,
and will do greater ones than these,
because I am going to the Father.”