

Eighteenth Sunday In Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 112

Reading 1 [IS 55:1-3](#)

Thus says the LORD: All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy? Heed me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare. Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life. I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18](#) - R. (cf. 16) The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

Reading 2 [ROM 8:35, 37-39](#)

Brothers and sisters: What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel [MT 14:13-21](#)

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here." Then he said, "Bring them here to me," and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over— twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

The First reading and the Gospel speak to the depths of God's love. The first reading speaks of the love of God in a way that can only be fully understood when in the company of Jesus, who feeds us. In the fullness of revelation, in Christ, we come to be certain of the promises of God. Not just as prophecy about that which is yet to come to be, but for us now as a foretaste of complete fulfillment of the promises in the life to come. We experience this amazing Love of God, as Paul says in Philippians 4, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* ([Phil. 4:6-7](#))

In the second reading Paul, in a boldly powerful way, affirms for us the seemingly unbelievable truth of God's love. We don't have to earn it to have or to keep it. There is no power strong enough to separate us from it. God, who knows all of our sins and sinful tendencies never stops loving us. Everyone one of us. Those born of water and fire, who are now living in the spirit as committed and faithful disciples of Christ... the lukewarm, those who've grown cold, those who've rejected God and those who have yet to hear the saving truth of the Gospel.

The Catechism, in paragraph 301 helps us to understand with greater clarity the nature of this Love of God who, *"With creation, [God] does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence."*

St Paul understands that in the consequences of the sins that have disfigured all creation there is an 'evil' that affects even the most innocent and holiest people. However what matters most to how this affects us, is the reality of God's everlasting love. Though God loves every human being who has ever lived, lives now and will love those yet to be born, in the same powerful way, there is a difference between those who have not only become children of God but are indeed committed to Christ, and those yet to receive the gift of their salvation. The difference for those born again into the divine life in Christ and those who are not, is a difference which is begun deep within the person by the Holy Spirit and leads to a very different understanding of the world and approach to life.

The enemy wants to use the consequences of sin and suffering to drag us all into despair, hopelessness, self-centeredness, and hard-heartedness. But those who live in the Spirit, who live the freedom for which they were made, they are the ones who foil the plan of the enemy, in their lives. They know that the sufferings of this life are temporary, and that glory awaits those who stay faithful in the midst of them - Good Friday dovetails into Easter Sunday. In the face of tragedy, the ones who have been made holy, set apart in righteousness, respond not with despair, revenge, and corruption, but with love, perseverance, and hope. They are the ones of whom it can be said are living in the imitation of Christ, in whom Christ is increasing and they are decreasing. In so doing, they participate actively in the ever-emanating victory of Christ and with grace they conquer those tragedies. They do so, not by their own power, but as Paul writes: ["In all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us."](#)

Yet, these children of God are not just passive actors in a divine play. Having saved us, God offers to empower us, if we would choose to humble ourselves just as Christ humbled himself for our sake. To trust, to fully receive the Love of God that leads to our beatitude. *"The New Testament uses several expressions to characterize the beatitude to which God calls man: - the coming of the Kingdom of God; - the vision of God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" - entering into the joy of the Lord; - entering into God's rest: There we shall rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end?"* [CCCC 1720](#)

“The beatific vision we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement, however beneficial it may be. God alone is the source of every good and of all love.” [CCCC 1723](#)

So then, how am I to go from the person, the less than perfectly focused disciple that I know myself to be... to the vision of me that God desires and has made possible. In choosing to remain rooted in the love of God, to remain in him and he in me... what powers, grace, gifts, virtues will ensure such a life of fulfilled promises of God?

The Baltimore Catechism gives a very nice roadmap of sorts, in the section on The Virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Lesson 10, paragraphs 119 – 129.

119. What are the chief supernatural powers that are bestowed on our souls with sanctifying grace? The chief supernatural powers that are bestowed on our souls with sanctifying grace are the three theological virtues and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

120. Why are these virtues called theological virtues? These virtues are called theological virtues because they have God for their proper object.

121. What are the three theological virtues? The three theological virtues are faith, hope, and charity. *“So there abide faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”* ([1 Corinthians 13:13](#))

122. What is faith? Faith is the virtue by which we firmly believe all the truths God has revealed, on the word of God revealing them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. *Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.* ([John 20:29](#))

123. What is hope? Hope is the virtue by which we firmly trust that God, who is all-powerful and faithful to His promises, will in His mercy give us eternal happiness and the means to obtain it. *“But hope that is seen is not hope. For how can a man hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience”.* ([Romans 8:24-25](#))

124. What is charity? Charity is the virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. *“If I should speak with the tongues of men and angels, but do not have charity, I have become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, yet do not have charity, I am nothing”.* ([1 Corinthians 13:1-2](#))

125. Which are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost? The seven gifts of the Holy Ghost are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. *“And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him; the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.”* ([Isaiah 11:2-3](#))

126. How do the gifts of the Holy Ghost help us? The gifts of the Holy Ghost help us by making us more alert to discern and more ready to do the will of God.

127. Which are some of the effects in us of the gifts of the Holy Ghost? Some of the effects in us of the gifts of the Holy Ghost are the fruits of the Holy Ghost and the beatitudes.

128. Which are the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost? The twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost are: charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, and chastity. *But the fruit of the Spirit is: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, modesty, continency.* (Galatians 5:22-23)

129. Which are the eight beatitudes? The eight beatitudes are: ([Matthew 5:3-10](#))

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth.
3. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
4. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.
5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
6. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of
8. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

So then, we see how the virtues, the gifts, the fruits are beautifully intertwined, interdependent and without which we cannot expect to experience the incredible peace and joy of God, the fullness of His love for us. Virtues are gifts from God that lead us to live in a close relationship with him. Virtues like habits, need to be practiced and never neglected lest they be lost. There can be no break from life in Christ, no summer vacation from the spiritual life. We must be persistent and persevering. The three most important virtues are the theological virtues because they come from God and lead to God. The cardinal virtues, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance are human virtues. They are those which "that on which other things depend", they are acquired by education and good actions.

Referring to believers, John wrote, "*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth*" ([3 John 1:4](#)). Walking in the truth, even though as St. Peter says, "*Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.*" ([1 Peter 1:8](#)) Our joy is dependent upon the truth of Jesus Christ and His presence in our lives.

No one who ever said to God, "Thy will be done" and truly meant it, ever failed to find joy – not just in heaven, or even down the road in the future in this world, but in this world at that very moment. In the very act of self-surrender to God there is joy. Not just later, as a consequence, but right then.

"So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love." ([1 Cor 13:13](#))

Additional Resources:

[Catechism of the Catholic Church 1829](#): The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion: Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest.108

[Catechism of the Catholic Church 1832](#): The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: "charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity."

St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa:

As stated above ([I-II:55:2](#); [I-II:55:4](#)), [virtue](#) is an operative [habit](#), wherefore by its very [nature](#) it has an inclination to a certain act. Now it may happen that from the same [habit](#) there proceed several ordinate and homogeneous acts, each of which follows from another. And since the subsequent acts do not proceed from the [virtuous habit](#) except through the

preceding act, hence it is that the [virtue](#) is defined and named in reference to that preceding act, although those other acts also proceed from the [virtue](#). Now it is evident from what we have said about the [passions](#) ([I-II:25:2](#); [I-II:25:4](#)) that love is the first affection of the [appetitive](#) power, and that desire and [joy](#) follow from it. Hence the same [virtuous habit](#) inclines us to love and desire the beloved [good](#), and to rejoice in it. But in as much as love is the first of these acts, that [virtue](#) takes its name, not from [joy](#), nor from desire, but from love, and is called [charity](#). Hence [joy](#) is not a [virtue](#) distinct from [charity](#), but an act, or effect, of [charity](#): for which reason it is numbered among the Fruits ([Galatians 5:22](#)).