

**TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

October 18, 2020

I have called you
by your name,
giving you a title,
though you knew me not.

I am

the Lord

**and there
is no other,**

there is no God besides me.

Isaiah 45:4-5

Saints Isaac Jogues (1560-1646) and
John De Brébeuf (1593-1649) and *Their Companions*

October 19

Their mission was to New France, but these missionaries found in present-day New York State and the province of Ontario a world wildly different from the homes they left behind. Six Jesuit priests, Fathers Isaac Jogues, John de Brébeuf, Anthony Daniel, Gabriel Lalemant, Charles Garnier, and Noël Chabanel—and Jesuit lay volunteers René Goupil and John LaLande—shared the gospel with the Native Americans they met, in languages they painstakingly learned, and through images they creatively adapted to the indigenous cultures (for example, John de Brébeuf’s “’Twas in the Moon of Wintertime: the Huron Carol”). But their evangelization was caught up in turmoil beyond their control: a smallpox epidemic, battles between French and English trading interests—the traders united only by their willingness to exploit the Native Americans—and conflict among the tribes themselves, Huron, Mohawk, Iroquois. The missionaries’ perseverance despite exhausting hardships, their steadfast courage in facing unspeakable tortures, and undaunted love even for those who martyred them, bore fruit, immediately in Kateri Tekakwitha’s sanctity, eventually in the Catholicism that still flourishes in the United States and Canada.

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Readings for the Week

Monday:	Eph 2:1-10; Ps 100:1b-5; Lk 12:13-21
Tuesday:	Eph 2:12-22; Ps 85:9ab-14; Lk 12:35-38
Wednesday:	Eph 3:2-12; Is 12:2-3, 4bcd-6; Lk 12:39-48
Thursday:	Eph 3:14-21; Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 11-12, 18-19; Lk 12:49-53
Friday:	Eph 4:1-6; Ps 24:1-4ab, 5-6; Lk 12:54-59
Saturday:	Eph 4:7-16; Ps 122:1-5; Lk 13:1-9
Sunday:	Ex 22:20-26; Ps 18:2-4, 47, 51; 1 Thes 1:5c-10; Mt 22:34-40

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time; World Mission Sunday
Monday:	Ss. John de Brébeuf, Isaac Jogues, and Companions
Tuesday:	St. Paul of the Cross
Thursday:	St. John Paul II
Friday:	St. John of Capistrano
Saturday:	St. Anthony Mary Claret; Blessed Virgin Mary; United Nations Day

Words And Actions

When people hear us speak God’s word, they marvel at its beauty and power; when they see what little impact it has on our daily lives, they laugh and poke fun at what we say.

—Anonymous second-century Christian

Look Who’s Talking

When money speaks the truth is silent.

—Russian proverb

Today’s Readings

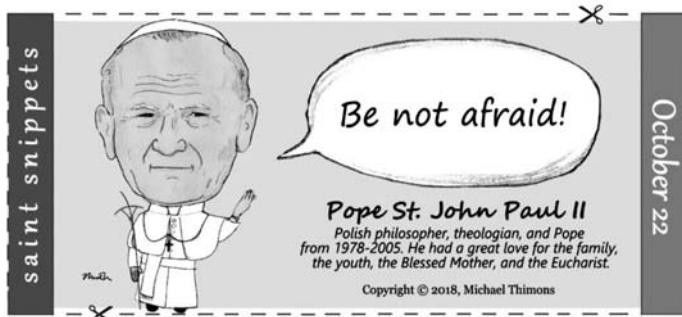
First Reading — The LORD said to Cyrus, his anointed, “I am the LORD, there is no other” (Isaiah 45:1, 4-6).

Psalm — Give the Lord glory and honor (Psalm 96).

Second Reading — Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians: We thank God always for all of you (1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b).

Gospel — Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s (Matthew 22:15-21).

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In God Alone

Isaiah speaks to us today of Cyrus, King of Persia, anointed by the Lord. God calls Cyrus by name and leads him in service to the Israelites. In this passage we hear that it is the Lord who gives Cyrus his title, who arms him against his enemies, and who opens doors and unbars gates before him. And God does all of this so that the people will know that “I am the LORD,” and that “there is none besides me” (Isaiah 45:6).

Paul opens his letter with essentially the same notion—that in God alone we find our grace and peace. Paul also gives thanks to God on our behalf, calling to mind our work of faith, hope, and love. And in the familiar Gospel reading, Jesus tells the Pharisees to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.

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Twenty-ninth Sunday in
Ordinary Time
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“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar,
and to God what belongs to God.”

—Matthew 22:21

Treasures From Our Tradition

Sadly, one of the most difficult reforms of the Second Vatican Council for the Church to embrace has been one of the most thorough and beautiful: the sacrament of penance. Because it is individual and private, it has been difficult for the changes to take root. Sometimes a priest may be grounded in the earlier form, and at other times the penitent may resist the priest’s attempt to blend in the proper texts and rituals.

Perhaps because the new form is almost identical in structure to the old, it has been difficult to insitute. It may also be true that with the liturgy in English now, it is far more clear that the Eucharist, too, is a “sacrament of reconciliation.” It is certainly true that there are different skills and gifts in ministry, and experienced penitents know that not all priests are equally at ease in this sacramental encounter. Sometimes a difficult experience can drive people away from a liturgy that is spiritually rich and rewarding. Yet we know that one bad meal seldom puts people off restaurants forever: the dinner gong tends to dispel bad memories, and so we try again. Individual confession and absolution is for us both treasure and tradition. If you haven’t been for a while, consider coming back to praise God for this gift of mercy.

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

God’s word speaks to our hearts today, acknowledging the sad fact that we lose hope at times, and encouraging us to trust in the Lord. Isaiah speaks of God’s astonishing plan to use Cyrus, a Persian king, to deliver God’s people from exile. After generations in captivity, the Israelites take new hope in this unexpected plan and praise God’s might. Saint Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians encourages Christ’s followers there to remain faithful to their call. Never tiring, they continue their “labor of love and endurance in hope.” The Gospel relates a heartbreaking reality in Christ’s ministry: plots to humiliate and capture Jesus. Knowing their treacherous plans, Jesus does not despair. He remains faithful to God and persists in his own labor of love.

Status Quo

Perhaps the most shocking sentence in today’s Gospel comes from the mouth of a Pharisee: “And you are not concerned with anyone’s opinion, for you do not regard a person’s status.” In context, that false compliment sounds savagely passive-aggressive. These scripture scholars do not actually admire Jesus’ freedom, the unconventional way he interacts with men, women, and children from every background. It’s possible some of Jesus’ peers are jealous of his confident ease, but mainly they find Jesus threatening. Over and over again, Matthew’s Gospel highlights the ways Jesus offends the Pharisees and scribes: failing to wash his hands in the traditional manner, for example, or, on the Sabbath, curing diseases and allowing his disciples to pick grain. Jesus does not

focus on earthly status and the status quo; his mission is to proclaim the kingdom of God.

The Risk Of Discipleship

When we deepen our relationship with Jesus, we follow in his footsteps. Sometimes this discipleship brings about obvious blessings, like belonging to a thriving parish community or feeling good about helping people in need. At other times, imitating Jesus means sharing in his sufferings. Like Jesus, we know the sting of rejection. We fear to lower our social status by spending time and money as Jesus may call us to do. At a social gathering, choosing to spend time with someone who is awkward or unpopular means we are not hanging with the in-crowd. Offering a full tith to charity means we have less money to spend on trendy items. Letting go of our earthly desire to be admired can be difficult, but the Lord accompanies us in the struggle. Truly, Jesus Christ does not “regard a person’s status.” Inspired by this divine impartiality, we pray: Lord God, help us to love the extravagant freedom that comes from you. Help us to follow you out of the status quo and into your compassionate heart.

Today’s Readings: Is 45:1, 4–6; Ps 96:1, 3, 4–5, 7–8, 9–10; 1 Thes 1:1–5b; Mt 22:15–21

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