

“Are not five sparrows
sold for two small coins?
Yet not one of them has
escaped the notice of God.
Even the hairs of your
head have all been
counted.
Do not be afraid. You are
worth more than many
sparrows.”
Luke 12

Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time: Oct. 11-17, 2009

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[PDF of this page](#)

Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

The powerful story of the rich young man is the gospel centerpiece in the **Twenty-eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time**. He asks Jesus what he can do to inherit eternal life and already keeps the commandments. Jesus offers him the challenge of the gospel: “Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor ... then come, follow me.” **Mark's gospel** tells us that the young man “went away sad, for he had many possessions.” When Jesus tells his followers how hard it will be for a rich person to be saved they are astonished - and worried. They wondered how they could ever be saved. “All things are possible for God,” was Jesus' response.

Saturday is the **Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr**.

We begin reading Paul's **Letter to the Romans** for our first reading this week. After a powerful introduction, Paul writes this community in Rome about God's righteousness (mercy or kindness) and justification (making us holy or one with God) which comes to us, not through the law but through faith in Jesus.

Each day we move through **Luke's gospel** as people gather around Jesus. He declines to give a sign other than the sign of Jonah. At a Pharisee's house Jesus calls for authenticity:

Daily Prayer This Week

From Sunday to Sunday there is so much here for us about authenticity. Jesus invites us to simplicity - to let go of the things that bind us and “come, follow me.” He wants to take us beyond obedience to the law or acts of piety. These are not bad in themselves, but they can hold a particular vulnerability to inauthenticity or hypocrisy, unless they are rooted in deep reliance upon God and faith in Jesus as our Savior. Mere cleanliness on the outside or placing burdens on people's shoulders leaves us still far away from an experience of God's love that overflows into love and mercy for others.

This week, let's wake up each day and ask God for the grace to be more authentic. While putting on our slippers, standing next to the bed for just 30 seconds, let's give this special focus to our day. While washing up or getting dressed, on the way to work, while doing laundry or walking down the hall to a meeting, saying a brief grace before even a quick meal, we can

“give alms and everything will be clean for you.” He challenges the religious practices of the Pharisees which miss the heart of fidelity to God and mercy toward others. Jesus tries to get them to see that, while they honor the prophets, they are no better than their ancestors who ignored and killed the prophets. Instead of hearing him, the religious leaders plot to trap Jesus. Warning his disciples about imitating religious hypocrisy, Jesus tells them not to be afraid, even of death, but to only fear losing their souls. Acknowledging Jesus is enough to save us. When we make our defense of our way of life, the Holy Spirit will teach us what to say.

For the **Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time** we hear the story from **Mark's Gospel** about two of Jesus' closest friends, James and John, who want seats of honor in “the Kingdom” they envision for Jesus. We can almost see Jesus shake his head in dismay that they have missed his point once again. He does not let his disciples get sidetracked into jealousy but calls them together again to give them his message: “Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

remind ourselves of this desire in our hearts. Choosing humility is simply choosing honesty in very small ways. Throughout our days, each of us can find words to express to God our desire to be more honest and transparent with ourselves and with others. “Lord, let me be just who I am today. I know that in your eyes I'm a loved sinner. In grateful humility, don't let me be harsh or judgmental with my family, with friends or co-workers. Let me give up bragging, shading the truth, any kind of falsehood. I want to abstain today from even thoughts that take me down a road of cheating on my relationships, my commitments, my relationship with you.”

This is all about focus and choosing to place our attention on our relationship with Jesus in the most ordinary moments of our day. As we end each day, we can give thanks that our desire was given to us - that whenever we open our hearts, our God is always there, ready to bless our desires.

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