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The Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

In the **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time** we hear the story from **Matthew** about the King who gave a banquet for his son and invited many guests. It is a powerful story about rejecting Jesus' own invitation and about God's universal invitation to a new group of "chosen" people.

Saturday is the **Memorial of Saint Teresa of Jesus, (St. Teresa of Avila), virgin and doctor of the Church.**

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: "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 make our defense of our way of life, the Holy Spirit will teach us what to say.

On the **Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time** we see the remarkable overlap of the gospels. **Matthew** tells us the Pharisee plot to set a trap for Jesus, this time using politics to see if he will offend either Rome or the people. Should they pay Rome's census tax? Jesus pushes the challenge back to them: "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." What is it they must repay to God that is God's? Their trust in Jesus, God's gift to them.

Daily Prayer This Week

From Sunday to Sunday there is so much here for us about authenticity. Jesus wants to take us beyond obedience to the law or acts of piety. These are not bad, but hold a particular vulnerability to in-authenticity or hypocrisy, unless that 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 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 our Lord and Savior 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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