

SEPTEMBER 2026

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Sinhi

SUNDAY GOSPEL REFLECTIONS
& CATECHESSES



DOMINICAN NOVITIATE OF THE ANNUNCIATION
Manaoag, Pangasinan

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Binhi September 2026

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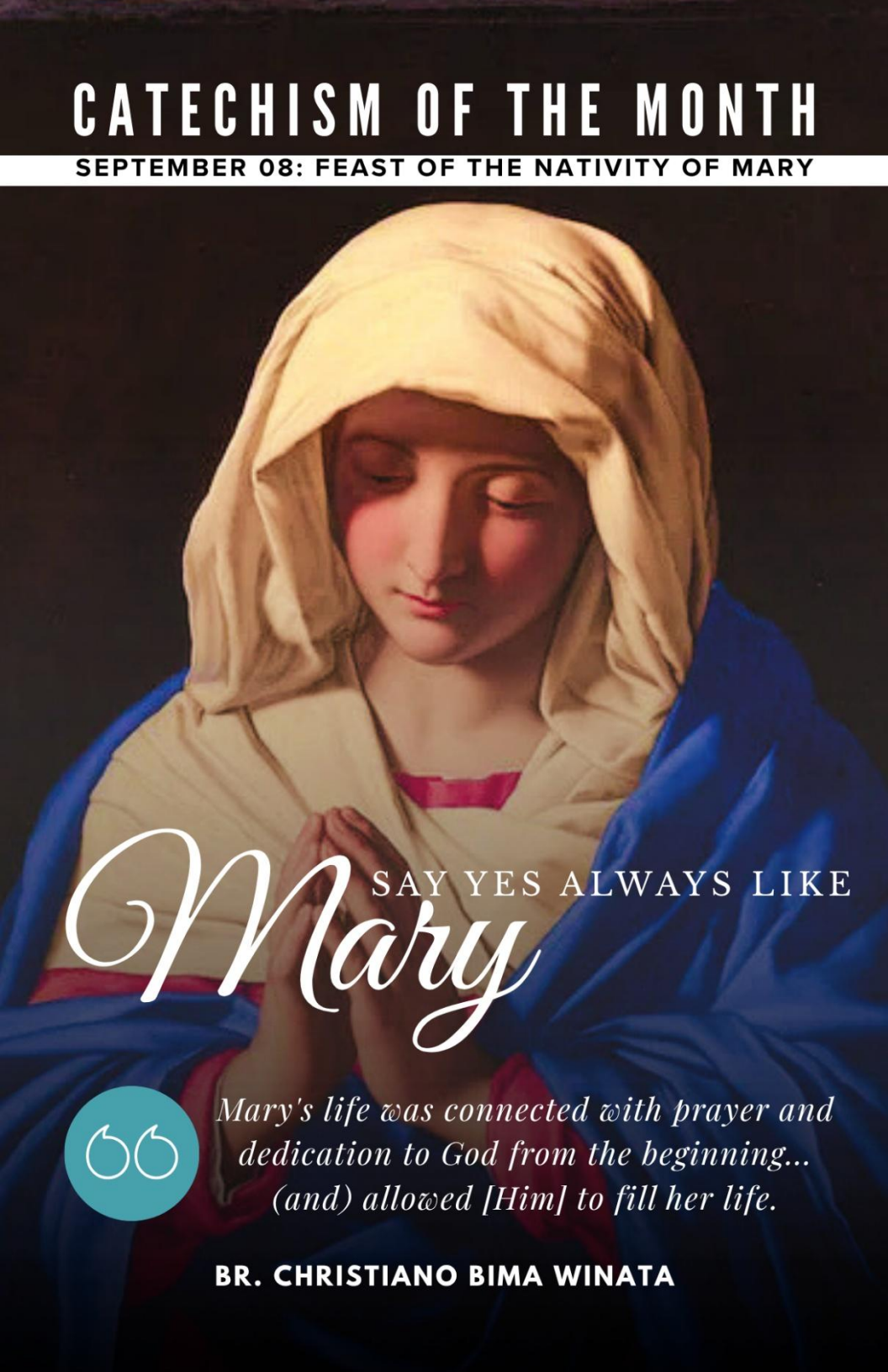
BINHI is the official monthly publication of the Novices of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, formed at the Dominican Novitiate of the Annunciation in the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag. Faithful to its name, *Binhi* ("seed") seeks to sow the seeds of faith, truth, and contemplation in the hearts of its readers.

Rooted in the Dominican pillars of prayer, study, community, and preaching, BINHI invites every reader to encounter Christ more deeply, embrace the wisdom of the Church, and grow in holiness. Through its reflections, articles, and catechetical content, it hopes to cultivate hearts that bear lasting fruit for the glory of God and the service of His people.

Cover: *St. Anne is depicted holding in her arms the Virgin Mary with a crown of twelve stars. This is part of the fresco painted by Manuel Farrugia for the Basilica of the Nativity of Mary in Senglea, Malta.*

CATECHISM OF THE MONTH

SEPTEMBER 08: FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF MARY



SAY YES ALWAYS LIKE
Mary



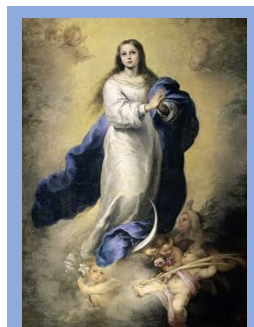
*Mary's life was connected with prayer and
dedication to God from the beginning...
(and) allowed [Him] to fill her life.*

BR. CHRISTIANO BIMA WINATA

The Church honors Mary not only because she is the mother of Jesus. Mary is also an example of faith, obedience, purity, prayer, and complete trust in God. The stories about her birth and childhood help us understand Mary as a person who was prepared by God for a special role in His plan of salvation.

The Catholic Church celebrates the birth of Mary on September 8. This feast is celebrated nine months after the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8. According to Catholic teaching, Mary was protected from original sin from the moment she was conceived, she also remained free from personal sin throughout her life. Pope Pius IX officially declared the teaching of the Immaculate Conception a dogma in 1854.

The Bible does not give us many details about Mary's childhood. Therefore, many stories about her birth and childhood come from Church tradition. One important source is the Protoevangelium of James, an ancient writing from around the second century. This writing is not part of the Bible and is not an official source of Catholic teaching. Some of its stories also cannot be proven as historical facts. Therefore, when we talk about these stories, we should understand them as ancient traditions, not as certain historical facts.



The celebrated painting of the *La Inmaculada Concepción de los Venerables* was made by the Spanish artist Bartolomé Esteban Murillo.



An image depicting Sts. Joachim and Anne with the child Mary.

According to this tradition, Mary's parents were named Joachim and Anne. They were described as faithful people, but they were already old and childless. In their helplessness, they prayed to God. Joachim went to the desert to fast and pray, while Anne also prayed to God for a child. When their prayers were answered and Anne conceived a child, Anne promised that she would dedicate her child to God. Eventually, Anne gave birth to a daughter whom she named Mary.

From the very beginning, Mary's life was connected with prayer and dedication to God. Although this story comes from tradition and not directly from the Bible, it helps us understand how the Church has viewed Mary as a person whose life was directed toward God.



The Presentation of Mary by Titian, 1538. service.

Holiness does not always mean doing something extraordinary. In the visions recorded by Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, Mary as a child was described as someone who studied, prayed, worked, and helped with simple tasks. She learned how to make things, clean, and take care of her responsibilities. She also spent time in prayer and meditation.

Mary's life shows us that holiness can grow from simple things that we do every day. Studying well, working honestly, helping other people, praying, speaking kindly, and doing our responsibilities with love can all become ways of growing closer to God.

Mary also had a deep relationship with God. She prayed, reflected, and gave herself to God's will which was eventually manifested during the Annunciation. When the Angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she would become the mother of God, she said "yes" to God without any hesitation.

Mary became an example of a person who said "yes" to God. God's plan for her at that moment was much bigger than what she could fathom. But, Mary did not put herself first. Instead, she opened her heart to God's will. This is one of her most shining moments.

We too might learn to say "yes" to God even when we do not totally grasp where the Lord leads us.

Honoring Mary does not necessarily mean putting her on equal footing with God. Mary will never take the place of God. Our devotion to Mary should always lead us to Jesus. The special role of Mary comes from her relationship with Christ and from her willingness to cooperate with God's grace. Therefore, honoring Mary should not end with Mary. Devotion to Mary should help us know, love, and follow Jesus more deeply.



The Annunciation by Fra Filippo Lippi, 1443.

The main lesson of Mary is that Mary allowed God to fill her life. Her story teaches us about prayer, trust, service, obedience, and dedication. She teaches us that holiness can be lived through ordinary things. We do not have to do something famous or extraordinary to become closer to God.



“

“Do whatever He tells you.”

”

- John 2:5 -

SEPTEMBER

01

“Love Remembers”

A CATECHISM on the Veneration of Images

by **Br. Elijah D. Gonzales**

Why do Catholics kiss a crucifix, light a candle before Mary, or bow before saints in prayer and devotion? To outsiders, these actions may seem strange, even contrary to Scripture, but our Catholic faith sees them differently, entirely, and profoundly. Catholics do not worship statues or images; they venerate the persons and realities those sacred signs represent.



Photo courtesy of manaogginorbasilica.org

When we miss someone, we look at their picture not because we mistake the picture for the person, but because the picture brings the person to mind. We remember their face, their smile, their voice, and the way they make us feel. The photograph cannot speak to us, but somehow it speaks to our memory. Love remembers. We remember what we love. A wedding ring reminds us of a promise, a handwritten letter brings back a moment, and a familiar song can awaken memories we might think we have forgotten.



At the heart of this dynamic is the mystery of the Incarnation, where the invisible God became visible in Christ. Jesus had a human face, hands, feet, voice, and body that His disciples could see, touch, embrace, and remember. God Himself entered the material world through human flesh. Matter is not God, but matter can point beyond itself toward God, just as signs direct travelers toward their destinations. The crucifix reminds us that God's love became visible, entered human suffering, and carried our wounds upon His Cross.



Love remembers what the heart cannot afford to forget! We keep photographs because memories matter, wedding rings because promises matter, and letters because lovingly spoken words still matter. Sometimes an ordinary object suddenly brings someone back to memory, reminding us of their voice, presence, kindness, or sacrifice again. Sacred images work similarly, helping us remember truths we easily forget when life becomes painful, confusing, busy, or overwhelming.



This is why Catholics distinguish worship from veneration, because worship belongs to God alone while honor can be given to His servants. When Catholics kneel before a crucifix, they are not worshiping wood or metal, but directing their hearts toward Christ Himself. And when Catholics honor Mary,

they are not treating her as a goddess or placing her above God; they honor her because she is the Mother of God. The woman who bore Jesus Christ, truly God and truly human, in her womb.

She is not the source of God's divinity, nor does she exist above Him; rather, because the Son she carried is truly God, the Church rightly calls her Theotokos, meaning "God-bearer" or Mother of God. When Catholics kiss Mary's image, therefore, they are not loving plaster or paint, but expressing affection and reverence toward the woman whose entire life pointed to



Photo courtesy of *Rappler*

Christ with her courageous “yes” to God. The image is only a sign, and the reality it represents is always greater than the material object itself.

The saints are not placed beside God as rivals to Him. They are honored precisely because God's grace worked through them. Their lives point beyond themselves to the God who made them holy. A stained-glass window does not exist so that we may admire the glass and forget the light. It becomes beautiful because the light shines through it. In the same way, the saints are not the destination. They are windows. They allow us to see what God's grace can do in a human life.



The righteous (saints) gathered around Christ in this part of Michelangelo's *The Last Judgment*.

Love remembers because the beloved matters, and Catholic devotion is ultimately an act of remembering the One we love. We remember Christ's Passion because we never want to forget the price of His mercy or the depth of His love. We remember His Resurrection because our darkest moments are never the end, and death itself cannot defeat God's promise.

Brothers and sisters, we must know our faith. We cannot simply do things because “that is what Catholics do,” but learn why we do them, to whom they point, and what they are meant to awaken in our hearts. Do not let our traditions become empty habits. Learn it, question it, study it, cherish it, and allow it to transform the way you pray, the way you suffer, the way you love, and the way you live. Know the faith so that you can live the faith; live the faith so that others may see Christ through you.

Be Catholics who know why we kneel, why we pray, why we kiss the crucifix, why we honor Mary, why we ask the saints to pray for us, and above all, why everything ultimately leads back to Christ. Let your devotion come



Photo courtesy of manaoagminorbasilica.org

from understanding, let your understanding lead to love, and let your love lead to a life worthy of the Gospel. Our faith is beautiful, and the more deeply we know it, the more deeply we will love it.

Know your faith. Live your faith. Love your faith. Never be ashamed of its beauty.

SEPTEMBER

03

“Humble Heart”

A CATECHISM for the Memorial of St. Gregory the Great

by Br. Elijah D. Gonzales

Pope St. Gregory the Great stands among the most significant figures of the early medieval Church. Born around 540 into a wealthy and influential Roman family, Gregory received an excellent education and entered public service. He eventually became Prefect of Rome, one of the highest offices in the city. Yet despite his position and accomplishments, Gregory came to recognize the insufficiency of worldly success. He gradually withdrew from public life, founded a monastery, and embraced the monastic vocation of prayer, contemplation, and service.

Gregory's conversion of priorities reveals an essential Christian truth:



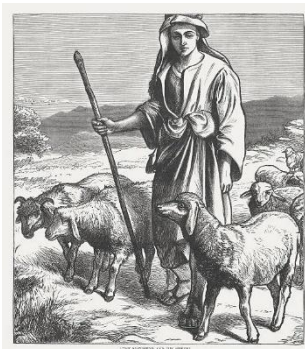
greatness begins when we recognize that our life belongs to God. His renunciation of privilege was not a rejection of responsibility but a purification of how he understood responsibility. Later, when he was called to become Pope, he carried this monastic spirit into the exercise of ecclesial authority.

In 590, Gregory became Pope during a period of crisis. Rome suffered from famine, disease, war, poverty, and political instability. Gregory understood the papacy not primarily as an honor but as a burden entrusted to him for the sake of God's people. He frequently described himself as the “servant of the servants of God.” This expression captures his vision of Christian authority: the higher one's responsibility, the greater one's obligation to serve.

Gregory's leadership was therefore profoundly pastoral. He organized assistance for the poor, administered Church resources, negotiated for peace, and responded to the needs of a suffering population. His actions demonstrate that Christian spirituality cannot be separated from charity. Prayer must open the heart to the suffering of others, and contemplation must lead to concrete responsibility.



His understanding of pastoral leadership is developed especially in his Pastoral Rule. Gregory taught that a shepherd must know the spiritual condition of those entrusted to him and must adapt his guidance according to their particular needs. The pastor must be capable of teaching without arrogance, correcting without cruelty, and encouraging without flattering. Above all, the shepherd must practice what he teaches.



Gregory's writings also reveal a profound awareness of human weakness. He understood that pride, ambition, anger, envy, and other passions can distort even those who sincerely desire to serve God. For this reason, Christian leadership requires continual conversion. The person entrusted with guiding others must first allow God to guide and correct him.

This is perhaps the deepest lesson of Gregory's life. Humility is not weakness, passivity, or an attempt to think less of oneself. It is the truthful recognition that every good gift comes from God and that every position of authority is ultimately a responsibility. Gregory could exercise great authority precisely because he understood that authority



did not belong ultimately to him.

Gregory died in 604, leaving behind a lasting legacy as pastor, teacher, writer, missionary, and reformer. He became known as “the Great,” yet his greatness was never founded on self-exaltation. It was manifested in his willingness to carry responsibility for others.

His life invites us to reconsider the meaning of greatness. The Christian does not become great by rising above others but by choosing to serve them. Gregory's example reminds us that the heart of Christian leadership is not power but self-giving; not recognition but responsibility; not pride but humility.

May St. Gregory the Great teach us to seek not positions that elevate us, but a heart humble enough to serve wherever and however God calls us.



One of the most moving photos of the late Pope Francis as he confesses his sins to a priest.

SEPTEMBER

06

“Pagtatama nang may Pagkakawanggawa”

A REFLECTION on the GOSPEL for the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

by *Br. Jaderick Kheen A. Bautista*

Napagalitan ka na ba? Ano ang naramdaman mo? Masakit, diba? May kasama pang galit at takot? Marahil, maraming emosyon ang bumabagabag sa ating kalooban sa tuwing tayo’y napapagalitan o napagsasabihan. Masakit sa ating damdamin kung tayo’y napagalitan ng isang taong malapit sa atin, na minamahal natin, na ipinagmamalaki natin. Mas masakit lalo na kung tayo ay pinagsabihan at ipinahiya sa harapan ng madla. Minsan, gusto nalang nating maglaho na parang bula.

Pero babaliktarin ko ang tanong: May napagalitan ka na ba? Ano ang iyong naramdaman habang pinagsasabihan mo siya? Ginawa mo ba ito nang mahinahon at mapayapa? O ginawa mo ito nang marahas na para bang nananakot na wala nang bukas? Ito ang mga katanungang marahil makakapagpabagabag ng ating kalooban at dapat nating pagnilayan. Aminin natin o hindi, napapalayo ang kalooban ng ibang tao sa atin habang pinagagalitan natin sila.



Ito ang kalimitang ugali nating mga Pilipino: kapag nagagalit, nananambit at nananakit (hindi man sa katawan kundi sa kalooban) o kapag pinagalitan, nabibigatan ang ating kalooban at masama ang nagiging tingin natin sa taong gumagawa nito sa atin. Minsan, gumagamit tayo ng pwersa upang masabi natin ang ating kailangang sabihin. Mula sa mga negatibong konotasyon ng pagtatama, marami

na ang nag-iisip na “Ok lang yan, wag mo na lang sabihin”. Isa itong patibong sa mga taong bulag sa katotohanan at nagpapalipas lamang ng mga pagkakamali ng iba.

Ngunit iba ang mensahe ng Ebanghelyo ngayong Linggo. Sinabi ni Hesus sa Kanyang mga Apostol na ang mga taong magpapahayag at magpapatibay sa Simbahan sa darating na panahon ay alam kung ano ang tamang paraan ng pagtatama o “correction”. Ang pagtatama ay hindi lamang hinggil sa katotohanang dapat nating ipatupad, kundi pati na rin sa tamang pagpapatupad nito na dapat ay ginagawa nang may pag-ibig at may pagkakawanggawa o “charity”. Dito, lubos na uunlad ang hustisya na



nararapat makamtan ng bawat mamamayan at mabibigyang-halaga ang kanilang dignidad bilang isang tao.

Sa bawat pagkakataon na tayo ay itinatama sa ating mga pagkakamali o kaya'y may itinatama tayong pagkakamali, huwag nating kalimutan na tanggapin o gawin ito nang may pag-ibig na makikita nating kumikilos sa



ating mga gawa ng kawanggawa. Ang pagtatama ay hindi dapat nagdudulot ng hidwaan at kaguluhan kundi ng kapayapaan at pagkakaisa. Bilang isang Simbahan, patuloy tayong magsumikap mula sa ating mga pagkakamali at laging umasa sa presensya ng Dakilang Pag-ibig, na walang iba kundi ang Diyos.

SEPTEMBER

13

“Freely Forgiven, Freely Forgive”

A REFLECTION on the GOSPEL for the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

by *Br. Alexander Bryan Loardy*

“Peter approached Jesus and asked him, ‘Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?’” From this question, Peter seemed

to put a limit on how many times we should forgive one another. To answer this question fairly, we should ask a similar question to the Lord, “Lord, how many times have I sinned against you? As many as seven times?” Let this question be our reflection today.

The answer to this question is absolutely “unlimited” or “uncountable”. We have sinned against God so many times. We have hurt our brothers and sisters many times by our words and actions, both consciously and unconsciously. We have done wrong more

than the number of the fingers on our hands and our feet, and even more than the number of hairs on our heads. Could we imagine that?

Yet although we have sinned against God many times, God still loves and forgives us. He continues to give us opportunities to rise again, amend



our lives, and begin a new life in Him. He never fails us. As a bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not quench. His mercy is beyond compare, and He continues to place His hope in us. His love led Him to die on the cross for our salvation.





If this loving God has forgiven us with such great love and compassion, what about us? We, too, must forgive those who trespass against us. Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times,” which means “unlimited” or “uncountable.” Yes, it is difficult, and forgiveness often requires a process. But as long as we are willing to forgive, God’s love will enable us to do so.

Love and forgiveness do not depend on our moods or circumstances, but they are a commitment. If we do not forgive one another, our heavenly Father will not forgive us. Moreover, by not forgiving others, we are

the ones who will continue to be hurt and distressed without others knowing it.

On the other hand, if we forgive those who trespass against us, not only are they set free, but we, too, are freed from hatred and the influence of the evil one. Then, we can experience true freedom and peace. Therefore, we must forgive those who trespass against us from our hearts, just as God has forgiven us and forgotten all our trespasses.



SEPTEMBER

14

“A Sign of Hope”

A CATECHISM for the **Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross**

by **Br. Josiah Tristan A. Dela Cruz**

On this day, the Holy Church celebrates the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross or the

Triumph of the Cross. The origin of the feast can be traced to the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem on September 13, 335. Years earlier, Saint Helena, the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine, herself a baptized Christian, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to establish basilicas around the sites related to Christ’s life, one of which was built around the area of Mount Calvary and the tomb of Christ – the Church of the Holy



The *aedicula*, a small shrine, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built to enclose the traditional site of the tomb of Jesus.

Sepulchre. On that site, the True Cross was excavated and discovered, and it was housed in the Church after it was built and dedicated. There, it was brought out for the veneration of the faithful.



In 614, Jerusalem was invaded by the Persians and the Holy Cross was captured. The Byzantine Emperor Heraclius sought to recapture Jerusalem and succeeded in his campaign in 622. The True Cross was then brought back to the Church.

After these events, the feast that honors the Cross of Christ was established and celebrated on September 14 throughout the empire.

Although the feast commemorates these historical events, we come to understand that the Exaltation of the Cross goes beyond celebrating Christ's physical cross. Today, we remember how the suffering and death of Jesus have brought us eternal life. The cross, which was then an instrument of punishment, has become the sign of our redemption. Christ's obedient sacrifice was the unique and definitive sacrifice that reversed the disobedience of Adam and Eve.

For all of us who choose to follow Christ, we also carry our own crosses. We are reminded that all our sufferings, because they are united to that of Christ's, will be turned to glory by the merits of His passion and death. As St. Paul says, as much as we have shared in the suffering of Christ, so we should also share in the glory of His resurrection. In our carrying of our crosses, we become efficacious signs of hope in and for the world, the same hope that flows out from the sacrifice of Christ. Thus, the cross is our identity as Christians. We must embrace it and carry it with our whole heart for the love of God.



SEPTEMBER

20

"The Unlimited Goodness of God"

A REFLECTION on the GOSPEL for the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time
by **Br. Michael Horas Korompis**

God is generous and just. He is free to do as He wishes with His generosity, but for sure, He will never cheat us. His generosity is not measured by human standards of fairness. Out of his abundant love and mercy, He freely gives us

his grace. The heart of God is beyond our human understanding of fairness. His goodness is not limited by our expectations.



Today's Gospel presents the parable of the workers in the vineyard. We hear about workers who were hired at dawn, others at nine o'clock, others at three o'clock, and still others at five o'clock. When it was evening, the workers who were hired early in the morning received the same payment as those who worked only for

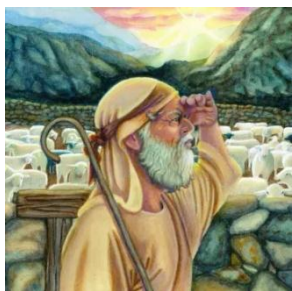
a short time. At first, this might seem unfair. From a human perspective, we can understand the complaint of the workers who came first: "These last ones worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who bore the day's burden and the heat." Yet, the message of this parable: God is generous and loving to everyone, regardless of when they come to Him.

Now the question: Can we rejoice in the goodness of God even when that goodness is given to others? What goes on inside our hearts when we see other people receiving blessings that we think we deserve more. Human as we are, we think that having done more, we should receive more. We easily fall into the temptation of comparison and competition. We look at another person and say, "Why did God bless him and not me?" "Why does she have an easier life?"

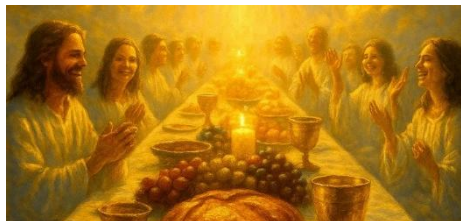
This parable challenges us not to compare ourselves with others. God does not owe us anything. Everything we receive is a gift of His grace. God's grace is not a salary that we earn, but a gift that we receive undeservedly. God does not love us because we have earned His love. God loves us because He is love. His mercy is always reaching out to us. The landowner who keeps looking for workers tells us that God never stops calling. It is never too late to reach out to God. We should trust the wisdom of God, appreciate His generosity, and be happy when others are blessed. We should stop measuring God's blessings according to what we think is fair. Instead of being jealous of others, we should learn to be grateful for what God has given us.



Cain became jealous of his brother Abel when God was pleased with his brother's sacrifice. The story ultimately ended with Cain's murder of his brother.



Like the workers in the vineyard, we are called to work faithfully and to have a grateful and generous heart. We are called to invite others into the vineyard as well. We are called to welcome the lost, the poor, the forgotten, the sinner, the person who feels unworthy, and the person who thinks there is no place for him in the Church. The longer time we spend working in the Lord's vineyard, the happier we should be. Being with the Lord in His vineyard is already a blessing in itself. Ultimately, nothing can make us standing in God's Kingdom except the grace of God. In God's Kingdom, there is no room for competition because there is enough grace for everyone.



SEPTEMBER

23

“Padre Pio: A Poor Friar Who Prays”

A CATECHISM for the Memorial of St. Pius of Pietrelcina

by **Br. Benz Louise B. Genelazo**

Born on May 25, 1887, in the small agricultural village of Pietrelcina in Southern Italy, Francesco Forgione was raised by his parents, Grazio Mario Forgione and Maria Giuseppa De Nunzio, who were devout Catholic peasant farmers. The second of five children, Francesco grew up attending daily Mass and praying the rosary with his family. At the age of five, he had already dedicated his life to the Church as an altar server in their local church of Sta. Ana, where he was also baptized. He was drawn to religious life at an early age after learning about a Capuchin Franciscan friar named Fra Camillo, who exemplified the order's commitment to extreme poverty, spiritual discipline, and the ideals of St. Francis. He then expressed his desire to join the Capuchin Franciscans to his family at age 10. However, he needed to comply with the required educational standards, and since his education had been delayed by working on their small farm tending sheep, his parents enrolled him in private tutoring, while his father decided to work abroad to support his studies financially.

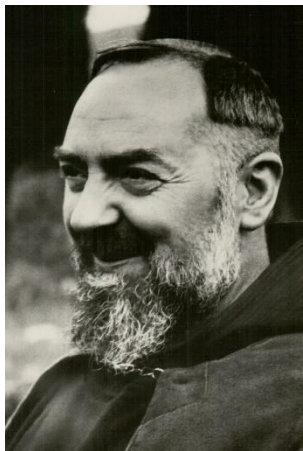


Photo credits to padrepio.com

After meeting the required education of the Franciscan Capuchins, Francesco entered the order at the age of 15, taking the name Brother Pio in honor of Pope Pius I. Three years later, at age 18, he made his simple profession, and at age 23, he was ordained a priest after completing the



required seven years of study. As a young priest, he was drafted into the Italian army's medical corps during World War I, but due to persistent poor health, he was repeatedly sent on leave before receiving a permanent discharge on March 16, 1918. Because of his poor health, he spent the first six years of his priesthood at home with his family. Finally, in September 1916, he was permanently assigned to the Friary of Our Lady of Grace in San Giovanni Rotondo.

Throughout his ministry, Padre Pio displayed spiritual gifts such as bilocation, the ability to read souls, prophecy, and healing. One of the most remarkable

cases of his bilocation was when he appeared in the air over San Giovanni Rotondo during World War II. The American bombers were supposed to attack the city, but all attempts to unload their munitions failed. He was later recognized by one of the pilots when they visited the friary after they established an American Airbase nearby and found Padre Pio, the friar who appeared to them. He would often remind his penitents of the sins they had forgotten and even scolded them for being insincere in their confession. One of the recorded cases of his gift of prophecy was during the visit of then young priest, Karol Wojtyła, who would later become Pope John Paul II, who went to confession with him. Father Wojtyła shared with Austrian Cardinal Alfons Stickler that during their encounter, Padre Pio prophesied his rise to the highest office in the Church. Another account from Padre Pio's secretary, Father John Aurilia, addressed Father Wojtyła as "Your Holiness" - a title reserved exclusively for the Pope. Among all the healings he performed was restoring the vision of Gemma di Giorgio, a little girl who was born blind without pupils in both eyes. After visiting Padre Pio, her vision was restored, although she still lacked pupils.

Other spiritual gifts manifested by Padre Pio are levitation, speaking in tongues, and the odor of sanctity. He had also supernatural experiences including celestial visions, communicating with the angels, and physical attacks from demons. A famous exorcist of Rome, Gabriel Amorth, wrote in his book that Padre Pio was relentlessly attacked by demons that disguised

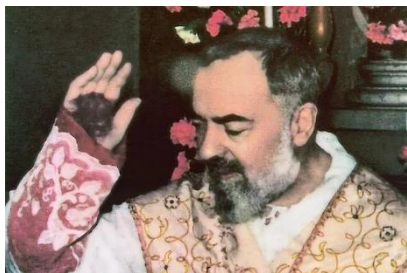


themselves in various forms, such as a large black wild cat, seductive young women, his spiritual director, and even Jesus, Mary, and St. Francis. His most famous legacy is Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza (Home for the Relief of Suffering), a hospital established "to alleviate the suffering of many families, poor and affluent alike.

Supported by generous sponsors, the hospital is now known for its state-of-the-art facilities and services.



Aerial view of the *Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza*.
Photo credits to hotelsanpio.com



Padre Pio became the first stigmatized Catholic priest in Church history. His stigmata, like those of St. Francis of Assisi, were characterized by bleeding from his hands, feet, and side, replicating the wounds of Jesus Christ during His crucifixion - wounds that, according to several medical experts,

emitted a sweet floral scent. He would lose a cup of blood each day, and the fascinating part was that his blood type was AB, the same blood type in the scientifically studied Eucharistic Miracles. Despite this, he suffered much calumny from people who were jealous of his fame, leading to the Holy See subjecting him to ecclesiastical inquiries and placing restrictions on his ministry - particularly barring him from celebrating Mass in public and hearing confessions. He accepted these restrictions with humility and complete obedience to his superiors, trusting in God's judgment and maintaining a clear conscience.

Right before his death, his bodily wounds miraculously disappeared - a phenomenon that even medical experts failed to scientifically explain. Almost 31 years after his death, he was beatified by Pope John Paul II on May 2, 1999, following an approved miracle attributed to his intercession involving the healing of an Italian woman, Signora Consiglia De Martino of Salerno. He was canonized three years later, on June 16, 2002, after a second approved miracle of young Matteo Pio Colella, who recovered from a coma. Pope John Paul II declared September 23 as his feast day and named him the patron saint of adolescents, civil



The incorrupt body of Padre Pio.
Photo credits to padrepio.org

defense volunteers, and stress relief. His canonization was attended by an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 pilgrims, making it one of the largest gatherings ever recorded in Church history at that time. Notably, he was also the first person declared a saint by the Palmarian Catholic Church.

Padre Pio's life was centered on the Rosary, Confession, and Eucharist. He was deeply devoted to rosary meditation as part of his spiritual practices. He heard confessions for 10 to 15 hours a day. For him, Confession was like a "soul's bath" that one should receive at least once a week - comparing it to a room that, even if unoccupied, still needs dusting after a week. Some pilgrims - in all walks of life, including scientists, queens, prime ministers, and religious - waited patiently for at most two weeks just to attend his Mass and meet him in the confessional for



his spiritual direction and counsel. He was granted honorary permission to preach even though he had not gotten a license to preach. He lived a life of intense prayer, preferring to be known simply as "a poor friar who prays." He would often say, "In books, we seek God; in prayer, we find Him." He bore the pain of his stigmata with joy, offering his suffering for all of humanity, and once remarked that his "greatest wish is to die." Despite the public skepticism and criticisms he received, he remained steadfast and faithful to his calling until his death. Padre Pio's life is an epitome of a complete offering to God, embodying the virtues of patience,

fortitude, temperance, humility, faith, hope, and love, knowing from the start that, like Jesus, he would have to walk the Way of the Cross. His theology is summed up in his well-known quote, "Pray, hope, and don't worry."

SEPTEMBER

27

"Just Do It"

A REFLECTION on the GOSPEL for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
by **Br. Robert Jairus B. Murillo**

We have all heard the saying, "Actions speak louder than words." In fact, we are so familiar with it that it might as well be a verse from Scripture. Well, today's Gospel puts this proverb on display.

The Parable of the Two Sons is a story of a father asking his two sons to work in the vineyard. The first son initially declines his father's request,

but changing his mind, he still proceeds to go to the vineyard. The second son does the exact opposite. After agreeing to do what his father asked, he does not follow through.



for me—I got the mandatory parental lecture shortly after. Ah, yes, the folly of youth.

In our Christian life, due to the mediocrity of human nature, we tend to have the same folly as the second son and my younger self. It is too easy to claim to be Catholic and a follower of Christ, yet many fail to actually be one. Okay, we may be baptized, but can we fulfill the obligations that go with it? Can we attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation? If we do go to Mass regularly, do we believe that Christ is truly present in the bread and wine? And if we believe that in Holy Communion, we truly receive Christ in our bodies, in our lives, are we able to receive Christ through our neighbors? Being a Christian means living like one.



Photo courtesy of manaogminorbasilica.org

There is no integrity in a person who says one thing and does another. What kind of soldier does not do what a soldier does? And it is an absolute delusion to claim to be an Otaku while only being a fan of Solo Leveling—a little something for the anime and manga lovers. But seriously though, a Christian is someone who does what is proper for a Christian. And that means not only being pious but also being righteous, forgiving, generous, kind, selfless, humble, and the like. These are the things our Father in heaven calls us to do; let us do them.



Thus, of the two sons, the first is found more favorable; indeed so. Yet, I might add, it is even more favorable to say yes to God's call and do His will.

So, contrary to the proverb I mentioned earlier, I believe there is value in a person's word. It is through words that mankind exchanges knowledge; through them, the other is known. It is also from the Word that all things come to be; it is the Word that actualizes. As God calls us through His Word to do His will, we must answer and act; for the love of that same God, just do it.

Danay na minomootan kita kan satong Kagurangan. (We are always being loved by our Lord.)



SEPTEMBER

28

"A Thousand Lives, All for God"

A CATECHISM for the Feast of St. Lorenzo Ruiz and Companions, Martyrs
by **Br. Michael Jim L. Sitchon**

Lorenzo Ruiz was born on November 28, 1594, in Binondo, Manila. He was the son of a Chinese father and a Tagalog mother, both devout Catholics. From his parents, Lorenzo learned not only their languages but also the values of faith, family, and devotion to God. As a young boy, Lorenzo served as an altar boy in Binondo Church. He was educated by the Dominican friars, where he developed a deep love for the Church and learned the skills that would later shape his life. Because of his beautiful and careful handwriting, he became known as an *escribano*, or a skilled writer and clerk. He also became a member of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary, deepening his devotion to his faith.



An old image of the Church in Binondo, Manila

Lorenzo eventually married Rosario, a native of Manila, and together they built a peaceful and loving family. They were blessed with two sons and a daughter. For many years, Lorenzo lived a simple and contented life, devoted to his family, his work, and his faith. However, his peaceful life would soon take an unexpected turn. In 1636, while Lorenzo was serving as a clerk in Binondo Church, he was wrongfully accused of killing a Spaniard. Fearing for his life and believing that he could no longer remain safely in Manila, Lorenzo sought refuge aboard a ship bound for another land.

He joined a group of Dominican missionaries and companions, including Fathers Antonio Gonzalez, Guillermo Courtet, and Miguel de Aozaraza, the Japanese priest Vicente Shiwozuka de la Cruz, and Lázaro of Kyoto, a layman who suffered from leprosy. With the help of the Dominican fathers, Lorenzo and his companions sailed toward Okinawa on June 10, 1636.



What began as a journey seeking safety would eventually become a journey of faith, sacrifice, and martyrdom. When Lorenzo Ruiz arrived in Japan, the country was under the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate, a government that had begun a fierce persecution of Christians. The rulers feared that Christianity could become a means for foreign powers, particularly Spain, to gain influence over Japan. Because of this fear,

missionaries and Christians were treated as enemies of the state. Lorenzo and his companions were eventually arrested and imprisoned. For two long years, they endured confinement and uncertainty. They were later brought to Nagasaki, where they were subjected to a series of brutal tortures meant to force them to abandon their Christian faith.

On September 27, 1637, Lorenzo and his companions were taken to Nishizaka Hill. There, Lorenzo was subjected to a terrifying form of torture known as *tsurushi*, or horca y hoyo—the “gallows and pit.” He was bound and hung upside down over a deep pit, with one hand deliberately left free. This was meant to allow him to signal that he was willing to renounce Christianity and thereby save his life. But Lorenzo refused. Even as his strength faded and



This image shows how *tsurushi* torture was carried out by hanging the person upside down over a deep hole.



his body suffered terribly, his faith remained firm. He would not turn away from Christ. For two days, he endured the pain until, on September 29, 1637, at the age of 42, he finally gave his life. His final words became a powerful testimony of his unwavering faith: “I am a Catholic and wholeheartedly do I accept death for God; had I a thousand lives, all these to Him shall I offer.”

These words reveal the depth of Lorenzo's love for God. He did not see his death merely as an end, but as an offering—a final gift of himself

to the God he had faithfully served. After his death, Lorenzo's body was cremated, and his ashes were scattered into the sea of Nagasaki. His persecutors did this to prevent other Christians from collecting his remains and honoring them as sacred relics.



A photo taken from the beatification of Lorenzo Ruiz in Manila, 1981, by Pope John Paul II.

The journey of Saint Lorenzo Ruiz did not end with his martyrdom; years later, his faith would be recognized and honored by the Church. The position for his beatification was prepared by the Spanish historian Fr. Fidel Villaruel, OP, who discovered in the Jesuit archives in Rome an important eyewitness account of Lorenzo's martyrdom. In 1981, during Pope John Paul II's visit to the Philippines, Lorenzo was beatified, marking the first beatification ceremony ever held outside the Vatican. Six years later, on October 18, 1987, he was canonized by Pope John Paul II among the 16 Martyrs of Japan, becoming the first Filipino saint. His canonization was supported by the

miraculous healing of a young girl, Cecilia Alegria Policarpio, who was cured of hydrocephalus after her family prayed for Lorenzo's intercession. Thus, the humble Filipino who once gave his life for his faith was raised by the Church as a shining example of courage, steadfast faith, and complete trust in God.

Although his ashes were carried away by the sea, his faith could not be erased. His life and death became a lasting testimony of courage, fidelity, and love for Christ. Lorenzo Ruiz, a simple husband, father, and Filipino layman, became a martyr whose faith continues to inspire generations of Christians, especially the Filipino people.



SEPTEMBER

29

"God's Special Agents: Missions of the Archangels"

A CATECHISM for the Feast of Sts. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels

by **Br. Alexander Bryan Loardy**

What do you know about angels? What role do they play in your life of faith? What do they look like? Are they chubby babies with wings? Are they beautiful, otherworldly creatures, captivating like light? Or are they ghosts, but not scary? Well, the truth is -



these are all misconceptions, misrepresentations, embroidered into myths and legends.

Angels are spiritual beings created by God. As spirits, they are not limited by space nor time. They are invisible and cannot be detected or perceived by our human senses, except when

God sends them and permits them to appear before humans to do His will. As intelligent beings, they possess intellect and free will. The intellect of an angel is vastly superior to the human intellect. While humans learn step by step through their senses and experiences, angels are given the necessary knowledge directly into their spiritual minds at the moment God creates them, except for God's secret plans, which He does not wish to reveal. While humans can forget things and make errors in understanding facts, the intellect of angels is so powerful that they do not fail to understand things, nor do they make mistakes. When faced with choices, they can see every single consequence of those choices perfectly. Therefore, the angels' free will is also different from humans' free will. The angels' free will is permanent and cannot be undone, unlike that of humans, who can learn from their mistakes and repent. The word "angel" comes from the Greek word "angelos", which means "messenger." Angels serve God as His messengers. Therefore, angels are named according to their function, not their nature.

If the Catholic Church has a hierarchy, so do the angels. According to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Doctor of the Church, there are nine orders of angels, which are divided into three groups. The higher their



rank, the closer they are to God, while the lower their rank, the closer they are to humans. The highest rank is the supreme hierarchy, which consists of the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones. They receive the light directly from God in its purest and most universal form. They contemplate God Himself. The middle hierarchy consists of the Dominions, Virtues, and Powers. They receive the light from the supreme hierarchy. The light they receive is broken down into broader concepts concerning how to govern the universe. The last is the lower hierarchy, which consists of the Principalities, Archangels, and



The Archangel Raphael Leaving Tobias' Family, Rembrandt, 1637.

Angels. They receive the light, which is further broken down into specific and concrete details so that they can apply it directly to human affairs.

Three of the seven Archangels whose names and identities are revealed in the Bible are St. Raphael, St. Michael, and St. Gabriel. They are known as Archangels because they have special and important missions in the history of salvation.

The first is St. Raphael. The name Raphael means “God heals.” He appears in the Old Testament, in the Book of Tobit. The story tells us that he healed Tobit from blindness, accompanied and protected Tobias in his journey, and cast out the demon Asmodeus from Sarah, who was soon to become Tobias’ wife. Therefore, St. Raphael is known as the Archangel of healing and a companion on our journey.

The second is St. Michael. The name Michael means “Who is like God?” He appears in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Book of Daniel, St. Michael appears as a powerful angelic warrior and the supreme guardian of God’s chosen people, Israel. Then, in the Epistle of Jude, the story tells us that there was an intense spiritual confrontation between St. Michael and the Devil over the body of Moses. Finally, in the Book of Revelation, St. Michael is depicted in his most famous biblical role as the supreme commander of the heavenly armies who defeats Satan in a massive cosmic war. Therefore, St. Michael is known as the supreme commander of the heavenly armies and a protector against evil. The Prayer to St. Michael



the Archangel is a famous prayer that we can pray to ask for protection from the evil one.



The Archangel Gabriel Appears to the Prophet Daniel, attributed to Francesco Solimena.

Last but not least is St. Gabriel. The name Gabriel means “God is my strength.” St. Gabriel also appears in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Book of Daniel, St. Gabriel appears as God’s messenger, delivering divine visions about the political future of the world and the timeline from the rebuilding of Jerusalem until the birth of Christ. In the Gospel of Luke, St. Gabriel also appears as God’s messenger to announce the birth of St. John the Baptist to Zechariah and the birth of Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Therefore, St. Gabriel is known

as God’s chief messenger and a protector of messengers.

So, now we know a bit about the three archangels. Now, what? How does that help us? We can ask for their protection, guidance, and intercession on our journey here on earth. We can also learn to be humble and always stand for the Truth as St. Michael, to be attentive to the needs of our brothers and sisters around us and be ready to help them as St. Raphael, and to be messengers of good tidings and witnesses of God’s love to the world as St. Gabriel.

St. Michael, St. Raphael, and St. Gabriel, the Archangels, protect us. Amen.



A stained glass window panel depicting the three archangels.





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