

JANUARY 2026

ISSUE



SUNDAY GOSPEL REFLECTIONS
& CATECHESSES



DOMINICAN NOVITIATE OF THE ANNUNCIATION
Manaoag, Pangasinan

What's on

JANUARY 2026

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BINHI is the official monthly publication of the novices of the Dominican Novitiate of the Annunciation at the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag. Featured in it are the reflections of the novices on the Sunday Gospels of the current month, short catechesis regarding our faith and the lives of saints.

Catechism of the Month



Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

JANUARY 1, 2026

*“Mary is also our Mother,
inviting us to begin the new year
with hearts open to the love of Christ.”*

By: Br. Cherwi Jonatan

On this first day of the year, the Catholic Church throughout the world opens 2026 with the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. In the Gospel of Luke 1:43, an inspiration of the Holy Spirit came to Saint Elizabeth: “And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” The title *Theotokos*, Mother of God, is not merely an honor for Mary, but a



profound acknowledgment of the mystery of the Incarnation: God became man in the womb of the Virgin Mary. It all began with the Council of Ephesus in 431, officially establishing this title to safeguard the divine-human unity of Christ, rejecting views that separated Him. Pope Francis reminded us: “The title Mother of God is the most important for our Mother. Why not only Mother of Jesus? Because these words contain the great truth about God and ourselves: there is no longer God without man.” Today, **let us reflect on how Mary, as Mother**

of God, is also our Mother, inviting us to begin the new year with hearts open to the love of Christ.

The title *Theotokos* (Mother of God) is not something new, but a heritage of faith since the early Church. The Second Vatican Council affirmed that Mary can only be understood in the light of the mystery of Christ: through the power of the Holy Spirit, she bore Jesus, the Son of God who truly became man without losing His divinity. This title affirms that the Incarnation is truly real. In the tradition of the Eastern Church, *Theotokos* is the highest title for Mary. Since the 3rd Century, this title has been used in ancient prayers and liturgy, such as the prayer *Sub tuum praesidium*. The Fathers of the Church, such as Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria, emphasized that acknowledging Mary as *Theotokos* is the key to true faith. The Council of Chalcedon (451) even included it in the official formula of faith. John of Damascus added: “This name embraces the whole mystery of salvation.”

Pope John Paul II, often connected this with Christmas and the beginning of the year. On January 4, 1984, he explained that the Church fixes the first day of the year on Mary to emphasize: The Son of God cannot be separated from His Mother. Mary is Mother of God because the Child she bore is God; she is His mother only in the order of human birth, but because

that Child is God, she is rightly called so. This illuminates the Incarnation: The Word became man through the cooperation of a woman with the divine motherhood of Mary, showing that devotion to her is always centered on Christ. In the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic tradition, the main interest is her divine motherhood, in which her virginity (before, during, and after birth) serves the plan of salvation as Mother of the Savior. The first hymn to her, *Sub tuum praesidium*, calls her “Sancta Dei Genetrix,” Holy Mother of God.



Today, January 1, 2026, under Pope Leo XIV, we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God with joyful hearts. This feast invites us to ask for world peace through the loving hands of Mary. As Mother of God, she is also our Mother: bringing Jesus into our lives, urging us to say “yes” to God’s will, and becoming a beautiful example of grace. As in the Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the Council of Ephesus called her *Theotokos* because that name “embraces the whole mystery of mission.”

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4

A King Was Born, and We Have Seen His Star

REFLECTION on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord
(Matthew 2:1-12)

by Br. Francis Hyle M. De Leon

Happy three kings! Happy Epiphany! Ang araw na ito ay ang simula ng Pasko para sa ating mga kapatid sa Eastern Orthodox Tradition, dahil para sa kanila, ang pagpapakita ng Panginoon sa mga hari mula sa silangan ang simula ng Pasko. The manifestation of the Lord to the magi marks an inclusion of the Gentiles to the salvific plan of God. Truly, Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, “God is with us,” and God saves us. The Gospel today, teaches us many things not just the story of the visit of the magi from the east, but as well as Jesus being manifested to us all.

Minsan, may nakapagsabi sa akin, “Hindi ako maniniwala hangga’t hindi ko nakikita.” Ika nga, to see is to believe. Ganito ang ginawa ng mga mago mula sa Silangan. Actually, they were not really kings, but astrologers. They studied the stars. Aside from that, they also studied the Scriptures. Kaya alam nila kung ano ang ibig sabihin ng pagpapakita ng isang talang

maliwanag. A king was born, and the magi saw his star. Knowing that the magi are seeking for the truth, for they are also wise men, they went to the land of Judah to look for the king, who was born. They went to look for Jesus. When they saw Him, they were overjoyed for they have found Truth himself, and they prostrated themselves and did him homage.



Ang Dakilang Kapistahan ng Pagpapakita ng Panginoon ay nagtuturo sa atin ng apat na bagay. At lahat ng ito ay patungkol kay Hesus na ating dapat tinutularan. Una, Jesus is a great king, yet born in a humble state. Nakita ng mga mago si Hesus sa isang sabsaban, ngunit hindi ito naging hadlang sa mga mago upang malaman kung sino talaga ang hari. They even prostrated themselves in front of Jesus, for they knew that he was truly a king. Ang tunay na hari ay mapagpakumbaba, hindi mapagmataas. Just like Jesus we are all called to be humble, not to think of greatness here on Earth but the greatness we can be in heaven if we live a humble life, and not filled with pride just like King Herod. **Jesus is a Humble king.**

Ikalawa, Jesus is approachable. Siya ay malalapitan ng lahat. Hindi siya nagtago sa mga dumalaw sa kanya, tulad ng mga pastol at ng mga mago. Just like Jesus Christ we are also called to be approachable, not a snob to others. He didn't choose to whom He will manifest himself. The rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, are all welcome to approach him. We are called to approach others equally. Sometimes, when prefer to be with the rich over those who have nothing to give us. King Herod chose to entertain the magi not because they were kings but because they held a vital

information regarding a king that might dethrone him, but Jesus welcomed them for they are part of His big family. **Jesus is an Approachable king.**

Ikatlo, Jesus is real and not invisible. God truly fulfilled his promise the Messiah was to come. Tulad natin, si Hesus ay



isinilang bilang tao. Siya ay katulad natin na isinilang na ka-imahe at kawangis ng Diyos, because He himself is God. He was born not just to live with us but also to preach and show us how to be a human. We are all called to manifest Jesus to everyone. Pinakita niya na ang tao ay dapat mabuti, hindi nagmamataas, at higit sa lahat, mapagmahal sa kapwa at sa Diyos. God calls us to be men and women, born in the image and likeness of God. This is the message of today's celebration, to manifest Jesus within ourselves and to others who need God. **Jesus is a Real king.**

Panghuli, Jesus is inclusive. Hindi lamang siya isinilang para sa mga Hudyo. Isinilang din siya para sa mga Hentil. Nagpakita sya sa mga mago mula sa silangan, upang mabatid ng lahat na hindi lamang siya naparito sa lupa para sa bayang Israel kundi para din sa mga nasa labas ng Israel. Tayong mga hindi taga Israel ay nabilang sa mga Hentil, at dahil sa pagpapakita ng Panginoon sa mga mago ay napabilang din tayo sa malaking pamilya ng Diyos. We are also called to be inclusive just like Jesus; not just choosing those who have measure up to our standards, our inner circle, but also those that do not belong our circle.

We are called to extend our circle to include them in our daily prayers and endeavors because we are all inheritors of this same Earth. Although we do not all worship the same God, we must not exclude them from attaining heaven. Jesus Christ is for everyone and he welcomes everyone. We should too. **Jesus is an Inclusive king.**

Tunay nga na isinilang ang isang “HARI” - **Humble, Approachable, Real, at Inclusive.** Si Hesus ay nagpakita sa atin dahil nais niyang makasama tayo. God wants to be intimate with us, his beloved creatures, not just through prayers but in flesh itself that is why he chose to be seen as a baby at his first epiphany. Siya ay isang haring hindi mapagmataas sa kanyang pinaglilingkurang bayan. God calls us to be kings as well, who will not lord over other people but manifest the love of God to others. This is the message of Jesus Christ's Epiphany - to let all people know, not just the Israelites nor the Christians, but everyone that He is for everyone and He wants to dwell with us. Indeed, God is with us.



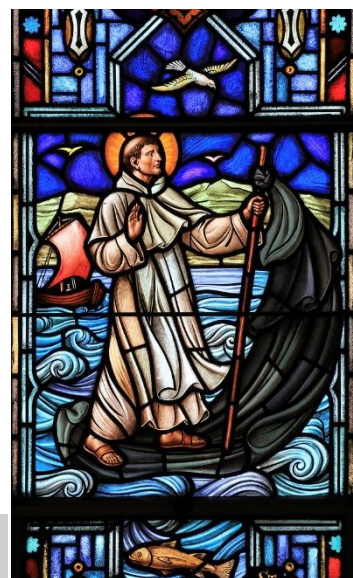
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St. Raymond of Peñafort: A Saint of Faith and Church Law

CATECHISM on the Memorial of St. Raymond of Peñafort
by Br. Rassched Chevy U. Avilla

St. Raymond of Peñafort lived from 1175 to 1275 near Barcelona, Spain. He started teaching Canon law or Church Law at age twenty and did so for fifteen years. He went to Bologna to study more and wrote a book on Church rules that is still in the Vatican Library. In 1222, he joined the Dominican friars after hearing Blessed Reginald preach. There, he helped start the Order of Mercedarians with St. Peter Nolasco to free Christian captives from Muslims. Pope Gregory IX called him to Rome in 1230 to be chaplain and **Grand Penitentiary**. The pope saw his skill in law and asked him to fix the messy Church rules, which were full of repeats, fights, and confusion. Raymond was canonized a saint in 1601. His feast is on January 7.



Raymond's great gifts to the Church came from his work on law and confession. From 1230 to 1234, he gathered pope letters and council rules into the **Decretals**, a clear book in five parts. Pope Gregory said in 1234 to use only this in schools. It ended the old chaos. He also wrote the **Summa de Poenitentia et Matrimonio**, the first guide for priests on sins, penance, and marriage. It used words from the Bible, the Fathers, and Popes. As a Dominican leader from 1238 to 1240, he updated the friars' rules and asked St. Thomas Aquinas to write against non-believers. He turned down being archbishop to stay humble. He even started schools in Barcelona and Tunis to learn the Arab language and convert Muslims and Jews. He is a patron of canon lawyers for his law work.

Today, we face mixed-up rules and hard choices, like in Raymond's time. Lawyers sort laws, parents teach kids right from wrong, and workers pick good paths amid bad advice. St. Raymond shows us to **use our minds for God**. He obeyed the pope,

helped captives, and fixed confusion with faith. We can do the same: pray for clear hearts, study truth, serve others first. Like him, we can turn jobs into ways to free souls from sin and follow Christ. St. Raymond's life calls us to simple obedience that changes the world.

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9

Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno

CATECHISM on the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Señor Jesus Nazareno

by Br Kodikara Arachchige Tehan Sampath Sri Dalas Perera

Mahál na Poóng Jesús Nazareno (Our Beloved Lord Jesus the Nazarene), more commonly known as the Black Nazarene in the Philippines, is a lifelike figure of our Lord Jesus Christ carrying the True Cross (a wooden cross). It depicts Jesus bearing the weight of the cross, silently embodying unwavering sacrifice and divine love on His way to the crucifixion.

The statue, carved by an anonymous sculptor from Mexico, arrived in Manila via a galleon from Acapulco. However, the exact time or date of its arrival remains unknown. The Augustinian Recollects, a Catholic religious order that arrived in the Philippines in 1606, have been linked to the image's presence in the country. However, they have stated that the Black Nazarene was not among the religious items they brought with them, raising the possibility that the image may have arrived before their arrival, possibly through a different galleon or other means.

The image gets its official name from the place where Jesus lived as a child: Nazarene. The statue is also commonly known for its dark complexion, which is an unusual depiction of Jesus, even in the Philippines. However, it is more typical in Mexico, where the statue was carved. The Roman Catholic Church encourages the image to be called Jesús Nazareno. On October 3, 2024, Manila Archbishop José Cardinal Advincula issued a decree renaming both the host church and the image to Jesús Nazareno to **"focus the people more on the holy name of our Lord rather than a color or attribute."**

There is no singular, complete image of Jesús Nazareno because the original statue was broken into several pieces, which were later combined into two main replicas. The head of the original venerated image and its



original right foot are housed in the statue called Venerado, which is enshrined on the high altar. This replica has a body made of molave wood (*Vitex parviflora* or *Vitex cofassus*). The original cross is also attached to this replica, though a significant portion was cut off and distributed to devotees during the "400 years" celebration in 2006.

The Vicário is the processional image used for the annual Traslación, as well as for the New Year's Eve and Good Friday processions. It retains the original torso but features a replica head made of *Litsea leytenis* wood (Filipino: Batikuling). The original

left and right hands of the image, as well as the original left foot, are kept in the Rector's office. These original hands are used for blessing people, particularly the sick and dying.

The venerable image has survived numerous fires, earthquakes, and other natural and human-caused calamities, especially the Philippine Revolution, the 1929 fire that destroyed the church, and the widespread bombings during the Battle of Manila in World War II.

There are two legendary stories associated with the color of the image. One suggests that the image turned black due to soot from the candles lit before it. The other claims that the image was burned in a fire on the galleon (the Spanish ship) that brought it from Mexico. Despite these two stories, Filipino Catholic theologian and historian Monsignor Sabino Vengco argues that the black color of the image is due to the use of mesquite wood. He bases his claim on research conducted in Mexico, where mesquite wood was a popular sculpting material during that period. Over time, mesquite wood darkens due to factors such as age, exposure to incense, and environmental conditions. Monsignor Vengco believes this is

the reason for the image's dark color, and he suggests that it also points to the historical and cultural connections between Catholicism and indigenous Mexican traditions.



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Jesús Nazareno is enshrined above the high altar of the Minor Basilica

and National Shrine of Jesús Nazareno in Manila. The veneration of Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno is deeply rooted among Filipinos, **who strongly identify with the passion and suffering of Christ, as depicted in the image.** Many devotees relate their own poverty and daily struggles to the Passion of Christ.

The largest annual procession for Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno is the Traslación procession on January 9, which celebrates the Feast of Jesús Nazareno. This event attracts millions of Catholic devotees, who try to touch or have their towels wiped by the image to receive its blessings and power. Along with the Santo Niño (Child Jesus), it is one of the most popular objects of devotion in the Philippines. In 2011, over six million Catholic devotees attended the Feast of Jesús Nazareno.

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11

Ang Sakramento ng Pagmamahal ng Diyos

ISANG PAGNINILAY para sa Kapistahan ng Pagbibinyag sa Panginoon (Mateo 3:13-17)
by Br. Jim Mark G. Orlan

Na feel mo ba ang pasko? Marami ka bang natanggap na aguinaldo? O ikaw ba ay kabilang sa samahan ng mga malalamig ang pasko? For your information, ngayon ang huling araw ng pasko. Ito na rin ang simula ng panibagong panahon ng ating Simbahan na kung tawagin ay pangkaraniwang panahon (Ordinary Time). Ito ay karaniwan hindi dahil sa simple at ordinaryo ang mga pangyayari sa ating simbahan kundi dahil maririnig natin sa panahong ito ang naging buhay ng ating Panginoong Hesus sa mundo. Ito ay nagsimula sa kanyang pagpapabinyag sa ilog Jordan kay San Juan Bautista.



Ano nga ba ang kahalagahan ng binyag na ito? Lahat tayong mga Katoliko ay bininyagan sa simbahan nung tayo'y mga bata pa, o marahil ang iba sa atin ay nabinyagan nung nagkaisip na o may edad na. Kung kelan man ito ginanap ay hindi mahalaga. **Una, tayo ay naging mga anak ng Diyos sa pamamagitan ng binyag.** Ang ministro (pari o diyakono) na siyang tagaganap ng binyag ay ang nag-alay sa atin sa Diyos sa ngalan ng Ama, ng Anak, at ng Espiritu Santo. **Pangalawa, tayo ay mga naging kasapi ng Inang Simbahan kung saan tayo ay nabibilang.** Bilang mga ganap na Kristyano, tayo ay may mga responsibilidad na kinakailangang tuparin upang ating makamit ang mga biyayang ipinagkakaloob sa mga kasapi nito. **At, pangatlo, dahil sa binyag, tayo ay makakapasok sa langit at makakapiling ang Diyos, sa takdang panahon.**



Ganoon lang ba ito kadali? Siyempre hindi! Sapagkat tayo'y pinagkalooban ng mga grasyang walang kabayaran tayo rin ay inaasahang tumugon sa tawag ng Simbahan na sundin nang taos-puso ang mga pinag-uutos nito. Ililigaw ba tayo ng Inang Simbahan na itinatag mismo ng Panginoong Hesus? Sa kanyang pagmamahal sa ating lahat, nagpakasakit at namatay Siya sa krus upang tayo ay tubusin mula sa pagkakabihag natin sa ating mga kasalanan. Hindi pa ba ito sapat upang

ipakita na tayo ay mahal Niya? Kailan man hindi Niya tayo papabayaan.

Muli po, sa huling pagkakataon, nais namin kayong batiin ng **Maligayang Pasko!**

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Ang Unang Magiting na Misyonero ng China

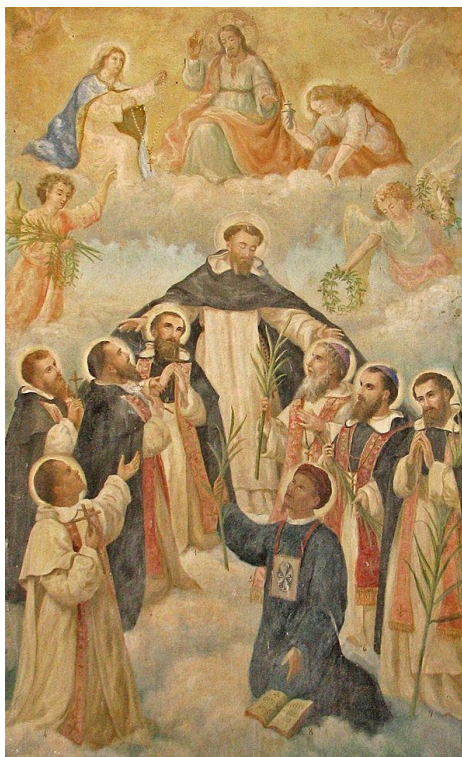
KATEKISMO para sa **Paggunita kay San Francisco de Capillas at mga Kasamang Martir sa China**
by **Br. Michael S. Pepania, Jr.**

St. Francis Fernández de Capillas, kilala bilang protomartyr ng China, ay isang paring Dominikano mula sa España na buong pusong nag-alay ng kanyang buhay para sa Diyos. Ipinanganak siya noong August 14, 1607 sa Baquerín de Campos, Palencia, Spain, at sa edad na labing-pito ay pumasok na sa Order of Preachers sa Priory of St. Paul, Valladolid. Doon nahubog ang kanyang pananampalataya at malasakit sa mga tao. Taong 1632, ipinadala siya sa Pilipinas, kung saan nagsimula ang kanyang gawang misyonerong, at inordenahan sa pagkapari sa Maynila. Sa probinsya ng Cagayan siya unang naglingkod bilang pari, nagbigay ng



sakramento, at nagpalakas ng pananampalataya ng mga Kristiyano. Ang kanyang karanasan sa Pilipinas ay naging paghahanda para sa mas mahirap na misyon sa China.

Pagdating niya sa probinsya ng Fujian sa China, si St. Francis de Capillas ay nagpatuloy sa kanyang misyon na magturo ng Ebanghelyo at magbigay ng pag-asa sa mga Kristiyano doon. Sa kabila ng panganib at mahigpit na pagbabawal ng pamahalaan, hindi siya natakot. Katulad ng mga alagad ni Kristo, naglakbay siya iba't-ibang baryo, nagdadasal kasama ng mga mananampalataya, at nagbigay ng sakramento sa mga lihim na pagtitipon. Ang kanyang tapang at malasakit ay nagbigay ng inspirasyon sa mga lokal na Kristiyano, na nakakita sa kanya **bilang isang tunay na pastol na handang mag-alay ng buhay para sa kanyang kawan.** Sa kanyang paglilingkod, ipinakita niya ang tunay na kahulugan ng pagmimisyon—**ang pagtuturo ng pananampalataya na may kasamang sakripisyo at pagmamahal.**



Noong January 15, 1648, sa gitna ng matinding pag-uusig laban sa mga Kristiyano, siya ay inaresto, ikinulong, at pinahirapan. Ngunit sa lahat ng ito, nanatili siyang matatag sa kanyang pananampalataya. Sa huli, siya ay pinugutan ng ulo, at sa kanyang dugo, nabinyagan ang lupa ng China bilang saksi ng pananampalatayang Kristiyano. Dahil dito, kinilala siya bilang unang martyr ng China. Makalipas ang maraming taon, siya ay itinanghal na Beato ni Pope Pius X noong 1909, at kalaunan ay dineklarang santo ni Pope John Paul II noong October 1, 2000 kasama ang 120 na Martyr ng China. Tuwing January 15, ipinagdiriwang ang kanyang kapistahan. Hanggang ngayon, si St. Francis de Capillas ay nananatiling huwaran ng tapang, pananampalataya, at pagmamahal sa kapwa, isang paalala na **ang tunay na misyonero ay handang mag-alay ng lahat para kay Kristo.**

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18

If Only We Were Still Like Children

REFLECTION on the Feast of the Sto. Niño (Matthew 18: 1-5,10)
by Br. Lawrence J. Pacatang

Children are powerful.

Ang mga bata ay makapangyarihan. Sa katunayan, mas makapangyarihan pa nga sila sa isang hari o presidente, mayor o senador, congressman o governor. At hindi ko po ito sinasabi bilang isang talinghaga lamang. Apart from the facts that children are the greatest in heaven and that they are highly favored by God, they are still literally powerful just by plainly being children. Paano o bakit? Una po, children emit or radiate joy and happiness naturally. Nakakapagpasaya man po sila

Mayor o Gov. pero kinakailangan pa nilang maglabas ng pera at kumilos. Samantalang ang mga bata nakapagbibigay ng saya kahit walang ginagawa. Makita lang natin ang cute nilang mukha, nawawala na ang ating mga stress at pagod. Kamangha-mangha, di po ba?

Pangalawa, children are so powerful that when they sleep, people



in the house would tiptoe when they walk and move around. Ang lahat ay nakatingkayad, takot na magising ang bata. Mind you, even kings and presidents cannot do this, only children. Kaya niyo po ba iyon? Ngayon, pangatlo at panghuli, di tulad ng mga hari o presidente, ang mga bata hindi na kailangan magsalita para makuha ang gusto nila. When a child cries, everyone in the house scrambles just to find or to get what the

child wants. No words needed. Ganyan kalakas ang kapangyarihan ng mga bata.

Idiocy aside, children are also really powerful in the theological perspective. In the Synoptic Gospels, we can find several instances when Jesus emphasized children as the “Golden Standard” of heaven. Kung hindi po ako nagkakamali, mayroon pong anim (6) na mga nasabing pagkakataon sa mga sinoptikong ebanghelyo. And these six instances can be divided into two, if we group them according to the intention of Jesus when He spoke about children.

The first set would be; Matthew 18:1-5, which happens to be our gospel reading for today, Mark 9:36-37, and Luke 9:46-48. When Jesus spoke about children in these Gospels, the Bible scholars said His intention was to induce **humility** among the disciples. Ibig bigyang diin ng ating Panginoong Hesus ang pagkakaroon ng mababang kalooban. These passages describe the argument among the apostles as to who would be the greatest in heaven. And then Jesus rebuked them saying, again, that the children are the greatest in heaven (**because they are humble**).

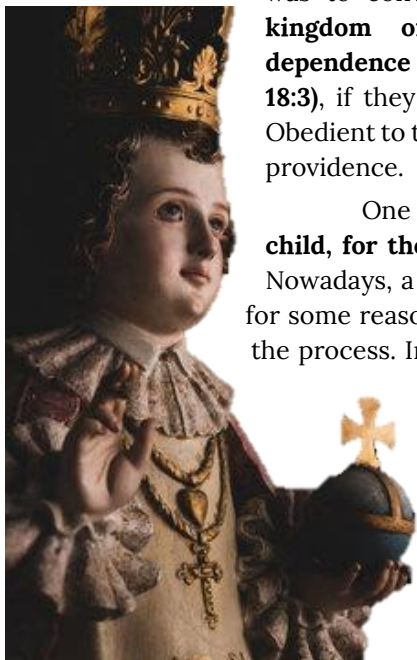
The second set now would be; Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, and Luke 18:15-17. Unlike the previous set, bible scholars contend that Jesus' intention of emphasizing children as the greatest in the kingdom of heaven was to convey that everyone should **“accept the kingdom of Godlike children, i.e., in total dependence on and obedience to the Gospel”** (cf. Mt 18:3), if they wish to enter the kingdom of heaven. Obedient to the Father's will and dependent on Divine providence.

One thing remains crystal clear - **be (like) a child, for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to them.**

Nowadays, a lot are trying so hard to be mature but for some reason are only becoming more immature in the process. In their “maturity”, for some reason they bring about more conflicts than peace.

We are called to be child-like not childish, as a lot of people are today.

These two are different. If only we were still as humble as children, then the world may not be this toxic. If only we were as still as innocent as children, then the world may not be this chaotic. If only we were still like children.



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25

Leaving Our Nets to Follow Jesus in Everyday Life

REFLECTION on the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Matthew 4:12-23)
by Br. Khen Airon A. Yonzon



Have you ever experienced while doing your normal routine—working, studying, taking care of family— suddenly someone asks you to do something else that completely changes your life? You might be called to help your community, mentor a young person, or

even take a stand for what is right in your workplace or barangay. Kapag nangyari ito, our first reaction usually might be, “Seriously, Lord? Ngayon?” But deep down, there’s also that spark of excitement—because we know life is about more than just routine.

In today’s Gospel, Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John—ordinary fishermen— are suddenly called by Jesus. **“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19).** Try to put yourself in their shoes. One day you’re untangling nets, smelling like fish and seawater, thinking about dinner and tomorrow’s catch ... and the next day, you’re being called to leave it all behind. Nakakatawa at nakakatakot din, di ba? Yet they responded immediately.

Jesus’ call is powerful because it meets us in the midst of the ordinary. He doesn’t wait for us to be perfect or have everything figured out. **May perfect timing ang Diyos; He meets us where we are.** Whether it’s a teacher tutoring kids after school, a tricycle driver patiently dealing with traffic, or a mother juggling work and family, the invitation is the same: “Follow me.” The disciples didn’t hesitate—they left their nets immediately. That’s courage! But if you think about it: leaving nets can also mean leaving comfort, familiarity, and even some security. **Minsan sa buhay natin, iba’t ibang “nets” ang kailangan nating iwan—habits, fears, attachments, or even pride.** Following Jesus is not just about going to church or praying—it’s about a willingness to let Him shape our lives, even in ways that challenge us or make us a little uncomfortable.

And here's a funny thing: imagine Peter and Andrew dragging their nets along, probably grumbling, maybe joking, "Are we really leaving everything for this guy?"—but they followed anyway. Life with Jesus is kind of like that: it's challenging, sometimes confusing, but it can also be joyful, exciting, and full of surprises. **May halong takot, may halong tuwa, pero sa huli, worth it talaga.**



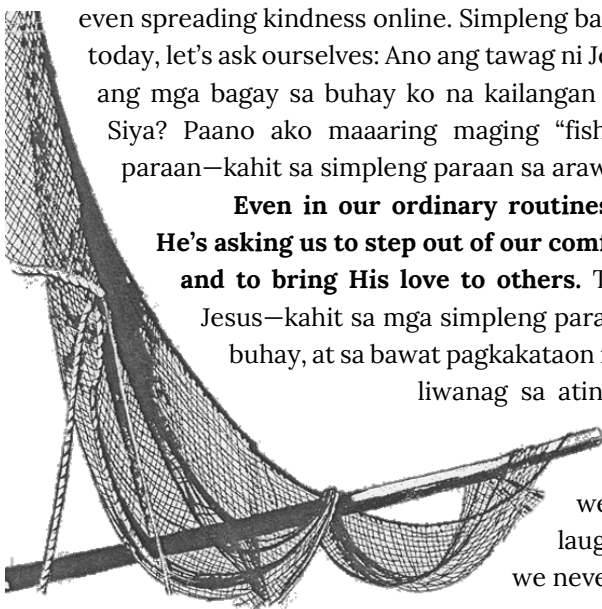
Another important lesson is community. Jesus didn't call the disciples one by one to work alone. He called them together. Life in faith is meant to be shared. Dito sa Pilipinas, we see it in small ways—bayanihan spirit, communities helping each other, families praying together. **Faith is strongest when we journey together.**

Finally, Jesus' call is also an invitation to mission. "I will make you fishers of men." Each of us, in our ordinary lives, is called to reach out, to bring hope, to serve others. It doesn't have to be grandiose. Sometimes it's just helping a neighbor, volunteering in the parish, encouraging a friend, or even spreading kindness online. Simpleng bagay, malaking epekto. So today, let's ask ourselves: Ano ang tawag ni Jesus sa akin ngayon? Ano ang mga bagay sa buhay ko na kailangan kong iwan para sundan Siya? Paano ako maaaring maging "fisher of men" sa sariling paraan—kahit sa simpleng paraan sa araw-araw?

Even in our ordinary routines, God's call is present. He's asking us to step out of our comfort zones, to trust Him, and to bring His love to others.

Tara na, sundan natin si Jesus—kahit sa mga simpleng paraan, sa araw-araw nating buhay, at sa bawat pagkakataon na maaari tayong maging liwanag sa ating pamilya, barangay, at

komunidad. And who knows, along the way, we might even find joy, laughter, and adventure that we never imagined.



JANUARY

28

Doctor Angelicus, Defender of Faith

CATECHISM on the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas

by Br. Yoga Dwi Kaswara

St. Thomas Aquinas is remembered in the Catholic Church as a great teacher who showed that faith and reason work together. **He believed that God gave us minds to think and hearts to believe, and that both are gifts meant to lead us closer to Him.** His writings remind us that truth is one, and all truth—whether found in Scripture or in the world around us—comes from God.

He taught that the greatest wisdom is to know and love God. For St. Thomas, studying was not just about learning ideas, but about seeking the One who is the source of all knowledge. His famous work, the *Summa Theologiae*, explains that God is love, and that our purpose in life is to share in that love. He showed that even the deepest questions of philosophy find their answer in Christ.

The life of St. Thomas also teaches humility. Though he was one of the greatest minds in history, he considered all his writings “straw” compared to the reality of God. His example reminds us that holiness is not only about intelligence, but about surrendering to God’s will. To follow St. Thomas is to seek truth with our minds, love with our hearts, and live with humility, always pointing back to God who is the fullness of truth and love.



*St. Thomas Aquinas,
Pray for us!*

13th Century

Dominican Blessing

May God the Father bless us,
may God the Son heal us,
may God the Holy Spirit enlighten us
and give us eyes to see with,
ears to hear with,
hands to do God's work with,
feet to walk with,
and mouth to preach the word of salvation with,
and the angel of peace,
to watch over us and lead us
at last, by the Lord's gift, to the kingdom.
Amen.

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