



parish

newsletter

18 September 2022 | Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

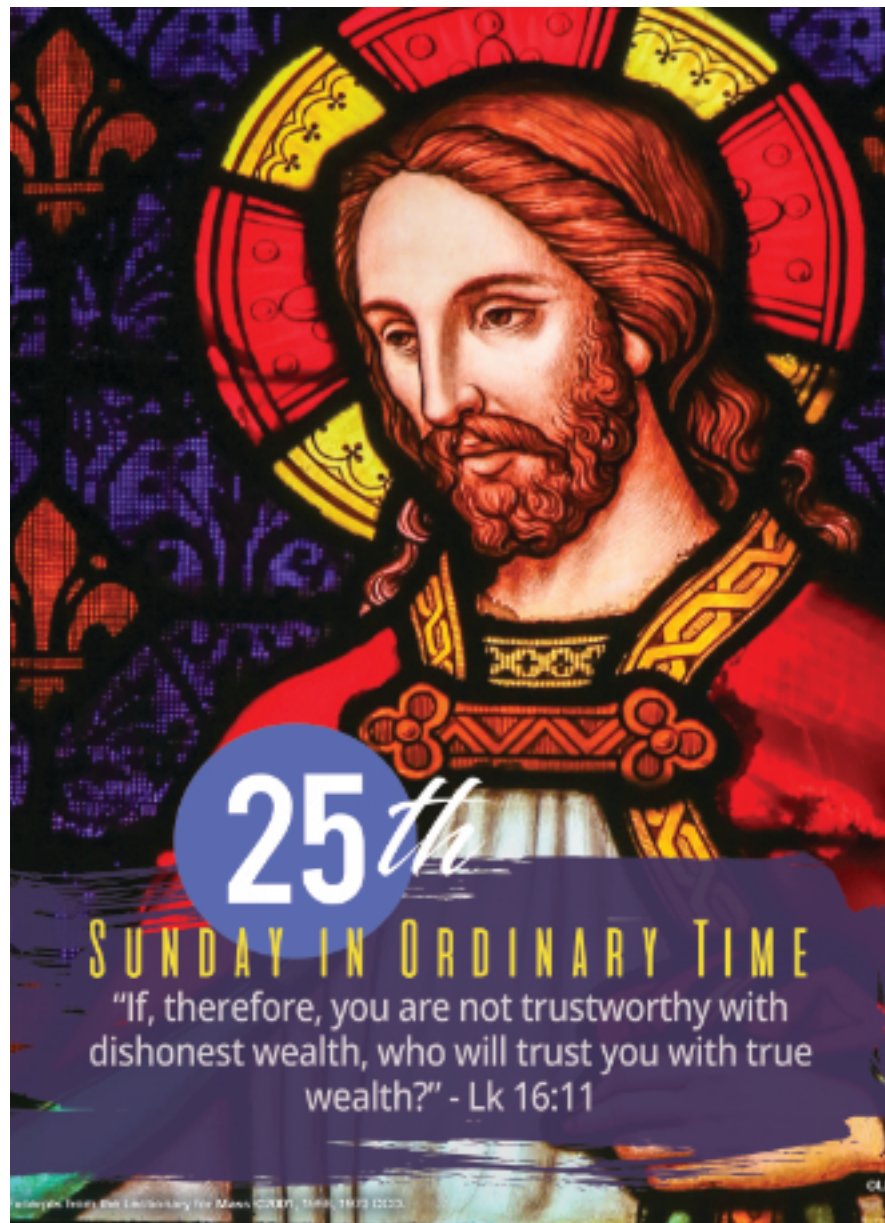
What do you serve?

"You cannot serve both God and mammon." Merriam-Webster defines mammon as material wealth or possessions, especially having a debasing influence. While God does not take issue with our need to use money for the business of our lives, there can be a problem with the attitudes we bring to it. We can easily become so preoccupied and obsessed with money that it becomes the real "god" we worship. Do we serve mammon instead of God? In their book, *Wealth, Riches and Money*, Craig Hill and Earl Pitts outline symptoms of mammon's influence in our lives. Some of these are worry and anxiety over money, money mismanagement, fear over "never having enough," an "I can't afford it" mentality, impulse buying, stinginess, greed, debt, and discontent.

Many of the things on that list can consume us to the point that we are distracted from what we really need to be doing. Many people spend an inordinate amount of time worrying about money and it becomes the source of their worst fears. If we are honest with ourselves, we need to admit that we place far

more emphasis on our material securities than we ought. In fact, we have actually convinced ourselves that we cannot live without it. Are we that certain about the presence of God? Many of the world's problems, especially those involving inequity and injustice, result from conflicts about money. Many equate money with happiness. Those successful in accumulating large amounts of it quickly realise just how wrong they are.

"Your ultimate allegiance is not to the government, not to the state, not to nation, not to any man-made institution. The Christian owes his ultimate allegiance to God, and if any earthly institution conflicts with God's will it is your Christian duty to take a stand against it. You must never allow the transitory evanescent demands of man-made institutions to take precedence over the eternal demands of the Almighty God (Martin Luther King, Jr.)." This is the point Jesus is trying to make. Unfortunately, when we look around our man-made kingdoms are far more prevalent than God's kingdom. When we start seeing greater evidence of justice, equity, dignity, re-



spect, opportunity, gentleness, holiness, solidarity, honesty, simplicity, care for creation, and a decrease in ambition, then we will know that God's kingdom is being served. We will be doing what we are supposed to do.

Everyday Stewardship

Fixing the Scales

Most people don't intend on being selfish. The reality of selfishness usually lies in the grey shades of our decision-making. We would never go out of our way to kick a homeless person begging by the highway exit. We would never steal money from our parish collection plate.

But would we drive past the homeless person without even extending a

thought or a prayer toward his need? Would we justify stinginess in time, talent, and treasure because of our own comfort? We all have been guilty of transgressions such as these in the past. We will fall again in the future.

Most of the evil in this world can be traced back to a feeling of entitlement that lurks deep within each of us — a frantic concern for our own good that we find difficult to shake. The same in-

stinct that compelled Eve to reach for the fruit that would give her the knowledge of good and evil still compels people to focus on what they are owed, on what they have "earned," on what they have "coming to them." We are so tempted to fix the scales. We are so tempted to keep score.

We would do well to remember that our God is not a God who keeps score. He is not a God who acts entitled or who tacks on extra dues, taking as much as He can get. He is a God who seats the lowly with princes. He is a God who seeks avenues for reconciliation and mercy.

— Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

Living the Paschal Mystery

This gospel puts to us a familiar and basic question: Whom do we serve? We have heard all our lives that we "cannot serve both God and mammon." This is such a common gospel saying; we are very familiar with it. We interpret the "mammon" as money, wealth, possessions. The basic question nudges

us to think of serving "mammon" in another way, in terms of serving self. We are our own greatest wealth, our greatest possession. But even we ourselves can get in the way of Gospel living. The challenge is to pay attention to how we are living and sincerely ask the basic question, Whom do we

serve? Our answer might surprise us at times.

The wily steward is clearly self-serving and decisive in doing what he thinks necessary for his own immediate well-being. But by acting in this way, he risks squandering his eternal well-being ("eternal dwellings"). To secure this, he needed to choose to serve God rather than self. Serving self keeps us mired in our immediate concerns, wants, needs. Serving God frees us to be decisive in doing what is necessary to secure the best for both this life and the next. The irony is that had the wily steward chosen to serve God and

Only by serving God alone can we ever secure for ourselves a sure future: being "welcomed into eternal dwellings." We must handle the things of this world and our daily actions in relation to what is eternal and with prudent decisiveness. Prudent decisiveness about our future means that we grow in our relationship to God, and that relationship is witnessed by the simple choices of our daily living. To put it simply, prudent decisiveness about our future means that God is truly at the centre of our lives. Truly, we serve God and God alone.

When it comes to paschal

mystery living, we often squander opportunities to gain "true wealth." The thrust of the gospel is that we act prudently in this life in order to "be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Prudence demands that we not squander opportunities to be charitable and just toward others. Prudence demands that we not squander opportunities to be trustworthy with the ministry of discipleship which we take on each time we say yes to our baptismal commitment.

Most of us are serious about our paschal mystery living. We honestly try to live good lives. When opportunities present themselves to act in a Christian way, most of us respond appropriately most of the time. This gospel challenges us to take this one step further. Paschal mystery living isn't simply a matter of surrendering to the self-sacrificing possibilities that come our way simply in the normal course of daily living. With an eye to the future, we must also surrender ourselves to actually searching out opportunities to live the paschal mystery. There is such an urgency about discipleship and proclaiming the Good News of salvation that we cannot be passive in any way. Ultimately, any kind of passivity is self-serving. This gospel calls us to be God-serving. Only by serving God do we gain everything for this life, and assure our place in "eternal dwellings."

Live the Liturgy

Human beings are often very clever when managing money and making a profit. Sometimes, we place so much of our sense of security in money that we lower ourselves to deceit and fraud. Our need to produce a profit can easily lead to economic injustice and exploitation. Money is necessary to conduct the business of our lives. However, it cannot become the god we serve. Being smart, savvy, and creative with financial wealth can be good. Being smart, savvy, and creative with living out our relationship with God is even better.

Our hearts have to find a home somewhere. Jesus reminds us of a choice we must make: God or mammon. We need to be cautious about "selling our souls" to what cannot fully satisfy us and falling into the traps of lust, gluttony, pride, and greed. Instead, we can better direct our efforts and our talents to the management of God's kingdom, which in the end is the only thing that matters. Any ideas on how we can use the talents and skills God gave us to make for a better world?





18	TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C)	Ex 32:7-11, 13-14/Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19/1 Tm 1:12-17/Lk 15:1-32 or 15:1-10
	08:00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel
	09:00 Mass	Convent Colin Stones (RIP)
	10:30 Mass	St Mary's In thanksgiving Hojilla-Candelon Family
	17:00 Mass	St Mary's People of the Parish
19	Monday	Prv 3:27-34/Ps 15:2-3a, 3bc-4ab, 5/Lk 8:16-18
	08:00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel
	12:05 Requiem Mass	St Mary's Margaret Patricia Rogers
	17:15 Evening Prayer	Mercy Chapel
20	Tuesday St Andrew Kim Taegon & companions	Prv 21:1-6, 10-13/Ps 119:1, 27, 30, 34, 35, 44/Lk 8:19-21
	08:00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel
	12:05 Mass	St Mary's Sheila Frost (RIP)
	13:00 Over 60s	St Mary's Catholic Centre
	17:00 Student Prayer	Mercy Chapel
21	St Matthew	Eph 4:1-7, 11-13/Ps 19:2-3, 4-5/Mt 9:9-13
	08:00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel
	12:05 Mass	St Mary's Norah Doherty (RIP)
	17:15 Evening Prayer	Mercy Chapel
22	Thursday	Ecd 1:2-11/Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 and 17bc/Lk 9:7-9
	08:00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel
	10:00 Open House	St Mary's Catholic Centre
	10:15 Confessions	St Cecilia's
	10:30 Mass	St Cecilia's Holy Souls
	12:05 Mass	St Mary's Matthew John Cain (RIP)
	17:00 Pasta & Pizza	Upper Room
23	Friday St Pius of Pietrelcina	Ecd 3:1-11/Ps 144:1b and 2abc, 3-4/Lk 9:18-22
	08:00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel
	12:05 Mass	St Mary's Romano Minchella
	17:15 Evening Prayer	Mercy Chapel
24	OUR LADY OF MERCY	Ecd 11:9—12:8/Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 and 17/Lk 9:43b-45
	08:00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel
	10:30 Confessions	St Mary's
	11:00 Mass	St Mary's People of the Parish
	11:45 Confessions	St Mary's
	18:00 Vigil Mass	St Cecilia's Ints of Bernie McDonough
25	TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C)	Am 6:1a, 4-7/Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10 [1b]/1 Tm 6:11-16/Lk 16:19-31
	08:00 Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel
	09:00 Mass	Convent Ints Sister Mary Baptist
	10:30 Mass	St Mary's Robert Marshall (RIP)
	11:30 Student Lunch	Upper Room
	15:00 Ministers' Meeting	St Mary's Catholic Centre
	17:00 Mass	St Mary's People of the Parish

First Reading:

Hear this, you who trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land! (Am 8:4)

Psalm:

Praise the Lord, who raises the poor. (Ps 112[113])

Second Reading:

This is good and pleasing to God our saviour, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. (1 Tm 2:3-4)

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia! Open our heart, O Lord, to accept the words of your Son. Alleluia!

Gospel:

"No servant can serve two masters. [...] You cannot serve both God and mammon." (Lk 16:13)

Questions for the Week

First Reading: The prophet Amos warns those who exploit the poor and the vulnerable will be harshly condemned by the Lord. In what ways do you defend those marginalised in our society?

Second Reading: Paul teaches Timothy to be open, generous, and inclusive in his prayer life. How would you find this spiritual advice a challenge in your life?

Gospel: In the parable of the dishonest steward, Jesus praises the steward for resolving his dilemma, in the end, with prudence. With his parable, Jesus teaches his disciples an important lesson on the dangers of monetary wealth. How do you avoid the trap of choosing money over God?



Oaklea, David, Marion, Dave, Neil, Paul, Andrew, Jacob, Stella, David, Alisa, Susan, Mary, Jack, Richard, Margaret, Moira, Gerry, Nick, Maureen, Stella and Rose.



Mary Elizabeth Hallan Scott, Veronica Stafford; George Bowler, Cambel, John Erskine, Andrew Camphuis, Colin Stones, Stella Kabega, Margaret Patricia Rogers and Dominic English

Why do we do that?



Question: Why is catechesis so important?

Answer: The mission of the

Church reflects the mission of Jesus to teach, preach, heal, and forgive. Through these acts, Jesus shares the good news of salvation and invites all people to share in the life and love of God. The Church continues this mission in all its ministries, but especially, and perhaps most importantly, through catechesis.

The task of handing on the Gospel is entrusted to the whole community, who by word and example, form young and new members in the way of the Gospel. Parish programs assist parents in teaching the basics of faith through liturgical experience, instruction, and faith formation. This ministry is essential for the par-

ish to grow, for individuals to develop as believers, and for the ongoing spiritual formation of the whole community. It reminds the church that preaching the Gospel and growing in faith are essential to our sacramental practice and our liturgical prayer.

Saint of the Week

Best known as Padre Pio, St. Pius was born Francesco Forgione in 1887 in Pietrelcina, Italy. As a young boy he suffered many illnesses including typhoid. He joined Capuchin Franciscans at 15 and took the name of Pius or "Pio" in honour of Pope Pius I. He was ordained in 1910, and at this time he received the marks of stigmata, the wounds of Christ, but they eventually healed. Frequent illnesses contin-

ued to plague him as a young man. Padre Pio served in the Italian Medical Corps during World War I, but he was discharged early because of illness, which was likely tuberculosis. He was assigned to the friary in San Giovanni Rotondo. In 1918, while continuing to serve at the friary, the stigmata appeared again, and this time remained until his death. Many faithful came to see him at the friary, his days were long, beginning with Mass at 5 a.m. then hearing confessions all day with

breaks to bless the sick. A simple man, content to do God's will on earth and with the ardent desire to serve the sick and poor in whom he saw Christ, he urged a hospital, Casa Solievo della Sofferenza (House for the Relief of Suffering), to be built in San Giovanni Rotondo. It opened in 1956. Padre Pio died at the age of eighty-one in 1968 and in 2002 Pope John Paul II proclaimed him "St. Pio of Pietrelcina."



Announcements

Ministers' Meeting

What's it like being a minister in Our Lady of Mercy Parish? If you're a reader, minister of holy communion, sing in the choir, help at children's liturgy, welcome, clean, serve at the altar, do the flowers, work as a catechist, help with health and safety or if you do one of a hundred other roles, we'd love to hear from you! Come along to a meeting of ministers from St Cecilia's and St Mary's on Sunday, 25 September at 3pm in the hall at St Mary's.

New Catholics
Are you thinking about joining the Catholic Church? Would you like to know

more about the Catholic faith? Do you know someone who has spoken about wanting to become Catholic? We're starting a preparation course for adults on Wednesday, 5 October at 6.30pm in the Parish Centre, Bridge Street.

40 Hours' Devotion
Starting in the evening of 29 September and finishing on the morning of 1 October we're holding our second 40 hours of prayer and adoration. Last year, as we were coming out of lockdown, it was a period of incredible grace for our parish and the city. What graces will Jesus give us this year when we offer him this extended time

of prayer?

Prayer 101
Come and learn from the great saints how they prayed and how different ways of praying can transform your relationship with God. Starting 10 October at 6.30pm in St Mary's Catholic Centre.

First Reconciliation and Communion
Registration is now open for children wanting to take part in this year's First Reconciliation and Holy Communion Programme. Please register your child on the parish website. Even if your child attends St Mary's Primary School you must still register them with the parish.

The program is open to all the children of the parish, even those who do not attend St Mary's Primary School.

There will be a parents' Meeting at 6pm on Monday, 3 October in the Parish Centre, Bridge Street to discuss the programme and the requirements.

Thanksgiving Mass
We're holding a traditional West African thanksgiving for new and recently graduated students at the 10.30 Mass on Sunday, 25 September. Everyone is invited to join in the singing, dancing and procession!

Welcome to Sunderland!
Welcome to new and returning students at Sunderland University. The parish hosts

the Catholic Chaplaincy to the University and we've got a week of special activities organised for Freshers' Week. Have a look at our website: sunderlandcatholic.com/chaplaincy for more details or see us at the Cath-Soc stall at the Freshers' Fair.

Irish Afternoon
There's an Irish Afternoon in the hall at St Mary's after the 12.05 Mass on Monday, 3 October with free refreshments. Everyone is welcome!

Joseph O'Brien
This weekend we have to say goodbye to Joseph, our seminarian, who has been with us for a pastoral placement. Thanks for everything and best wishes for new new academic year!

Flock Notes

As many of you will know, I was away in the Holy Land for a pilgrimage. It is a wonderful experience and I'd recommend it to everyone who is able to go. Visiting the actual places associated with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus puts seems to connect you in an even deeper way with him.

Two experiences stand out for me and both happened in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Usually you have to queue for hours to enter the tomb of Jesus and on an organised pilgrimage with a tight schedule that isn't possible. This time, however, we

walked into a near-empty basilica and queued for 10 minutes to pray at the spot where Jesus' body lay and rose from the dead. I watched as everyone in the group left the tomb, most in tears, everyone speechless at the encounter with holiness in that place.

The second was celebrating Mass mere metres away from where the events every Mass commemorates actually happened! I will never forget the sound of our songs filling the church nor the privilege of celebrating Mass there. Thank-you Jesus!



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