



## 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time for St. Ambrose Parish July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Pastor:** Fr. Henry Smolenaars

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**Tabitha Centre:** 902-742-8960

**Reconciliation/confession** Please email Fr. Henry if you can or call the office to make an appointment.

**Office telephone:** 902-742-7151

### MASS INTENTIONS July 11<sup>th</sup> 2020 – July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Sat. 4pm** Parishioners

**Sun. 10am** Victor McGuire and J Clifford O'Connell

**Wed. 9am** Special Intention and Amos Surette

**Sat. 4pm** Eleanor Brush and Florence Blanchard Zell

**Sun. 10am** Parishioners

**MASS SIGNUP:** If you would like to attend mass, we ask you to please call the parish office between the hours of 9:30 to 1:00 Monday to Friday to register. With social distancing in place we will be using a lottery system to choose who will attend the mass each weekend. We are asking for your patience and eventually everyone wishing to attend will have a turn. Please note that when you register, your name will remain in the system until you call and remove it or until things can return to normal.

**WEDNESDAY MASS:** For the time being we are not planning to do a lottery draw for this mass. Protocols will be followed for those who plan to attend. If it becomes necessary to do the lottery then we will implement it at that time.

**LIVE MASS WITH FR. HENRY:** I (Fr. Henry) do a live mass every Wednesday and Sunday at 9:00 am (unless there are technical difficulties and then it will be put on after it has been recorded.). The next live mass is this Sunday, streamed live from St. Ambrose Church. If you want to watch, go to our web site at [www.stambroseymouth.ca](http://www.stambroseymouth.ca) or go to my YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/channel/UC1CwQV-c8xpu57fbCsu0fLg/videos?view=57&flow=grid](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1CwQV-c8xpu57fbCsu0fLg/videos?view=57&flow=grid)  
(Copy and paste this link into your web browser if you would like to follow along.)



**QUOTE OF THE WEEK:** Every guest is to be received as if they were Christ himself. -St. Benedict

**SUPPORTING YOUR PARISH FINANCIALLY:** During this difficult time, I ask that you continue to support our Parish financially. If you want you can drop donations off at the office during office hours. Please knock on the door to be served. We now have **EMAIL TRANSFERS SET UP**, send to [stambrosemail@gmail.com](mailto:stambrosemail@gmail.com) please add your envelope number in the message box if you have one or a mailing address for an income tax receipt. We

still have an account on line to which you can donate to. Simply go to <http://www.stambroseyarmouth.ca/> and scroll down the page to the donate button in red and follow the directions.



Our sympathy is extended to the family and friends of  
Ann Marie Pennell, Thérèse Marie Muise and Agnes Marie Hurlburt  
Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon Them.

### **REFLECTION: The Divine Attraction**

#### ***Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A***

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. [Matthew 13:1-2](#)  
This is not a common experience. It is clear that people were in such awe of our Lord that they were drawn to Him with a holy and divine attraction. The crowds were mesmerized by Jesus and they hung on His every word. They were so drawn to Him that they crowded along the shore to listen as Jesus spoke from the boat. This Gospel story should pose a question to you on a personal level. Are you drawn to Jesus in a similar way? There are many things we find ourselves drawn to. It may be some hobby, or a personal interest, perhaps it's your job or some other aspect of your life. But what about our Lord and His holy Word? How drawn to Him are you?

Ideally, we should discover within our hearts a burning desire to be with Jesus, to know Him, love Him and encounter His mercy more fully in our lives. There should be a tug on our hearts that is placed there by Jesus Himself. This tug becomes a divine attraction that becomes the central motivation for our lives. From this attraction we respond to Him, listen to Him and give our lives more fully to Him. This is a grace given to those who are open and are ready and willing to hear and respond.

Reflect, today, upon the merciful Heart of our Lord calling you to turn to Him with all the powers of your soul. Allow Him to draw you in and respond by giving your time and attention to Him. From there, He will lead you where He desires you to go.

*Lord, my life is Yours. Please draw me into Your most merciful Heart. Help me to be mesmerized by Your splendor and goodness. I give to You all the powers of my soul, dear Lord. Please take me and lead me according to Your most holy will. Jesus, I trust in You.*

### **Peace of the Sword?**

#### ***Monday of the Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time***

Jesus said to his Apostles: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's enemies will be those of his household." [Matthew 10:34-36](#)

Hmmm...was this a typo? Did Jesus really say this? This is one of those passages that can leave us a bit baffled and confused. But Jesus does this all the time so we shouldn't be surprised. So, what does Jesus mean? Does He really want to bring the "sword" and division rather than peace?

It's important when reading this passage that we read it in light of everything else Jesus has ever written. We must read it in light of all His teachings on love and mercy, forgiveness and unity, etc. But with that said, what was Jesus talking about in this passage?

In large part, He was speaking about one of the effects of the Truth. The Truth of the Gospel has the power to deeply unite us to God when we fully accept it as the Word of Truth. But another effect is that it divides us from those who refuse to be united to God in the Truth. We are not intending this and we ought not do so by our own will or intention, but it must be understood that by immersing ourselves in the Truth, we are also putting ourselves at odds with everyone who may be at odds with God and His Truth.

Our culture today wants to preach what we call "relativism." This is an idea that what is good and true for me may not be good and true for you but that, in spite of all having different "truths," we can still all be one happy family. But that's not the Truth!

The Truth (with a capital "T") is that God has established what is right and what is wrong. He has set His moral law over all of humanity and this cannot be undone. He has also set forth the truths of our faith and those cannot be undone. And that law is as true for me as it is for you or anyone else.

This passage above offers us the sobering reality that by rejecting all forms of relativism and by holding onto Truth, we also run the risk of division, even with those in our families. This is sad and this hurt. Jesus offers this passage especially to strengthen us when this happens. If division happens as a result of our sin, shame on us. If it happens as a result of the Truth (as offered in mercy), then we should accept it as a result of the Gospel. Jesus was rejected and we should not be surprised if that happens to us, too.

Reflect, today, upon how fully you are ready and willing to accept the full Truth of the Gospel no matter the consequences. The full Truth will set you free and will also, at times, reveal the division present between you and those who have rejected God. You must pray for unity in Christ, but not be willing to compromise so as to bring about a false unity.

*Lord, give me the wisdom and courage I need to accept all You have revealed. Help me to love You above all things and to accept whatever the consequences are of me following You. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **It's Time to Repent!**

### ***Tuesday of the Fifteenth Week of Ordinary Time***

Jesus began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!" [Matthew 11:20-21a](#)

What an act of mercy and love on the part of Jesus! He rebukes those in the towns of Chorazin and Bethsaida because He loves them and He sees that they continue to hold on to their sinful lives even though He has brought them the Gospel and performed many mighty deeds. They remain obstinate, trapped, confused, unwilling to repent, and unwilling to change their ways. In this context, Jesus offers a wonderful form of mercy. He chastises them! After the passage above He goes on to say, "I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you."

There is a wonderful distinction here that should help us hear what God may be saying to us at times, as well as help us know how to deal with those around us who habitually sin and cause hurt in our lives or the lives of others. The distinction has to do with Jesus' motivation for chastising the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida. Why did He do that? And what was the motivation behind His actions?

Jesus chastises them out of love and out of a desire that they change. They did not immediately repent of their sin when He offered an invitation and powerful witness of His miracles, so He needed to take things to a new level. And this new level was a strong and clear rebuke out of love.

This action of Jesus could at first be perceived as an emotional outburst of anger. But that's the key distinction. Jesus did not rebuke them strongly because He was mad and lost control. Rather, He rebuked them because they needed that rebuke to change.

The same truth can be applied to our lives. At times we change our lives and overcome sin as a result of the gentle invitation of Jesus to grace. But, at other times, when sin is deep, we need a holy rebuke. In this case

we should hear these words of Jesus as if they were directed at us. This may be the specific act of mercy we need in our lives.

It also gives us great insight as to how we deal with others. Parents, for example, can learn much from this. Children will regularly go astray in various ways and will need correction. It certainly is proper to start with gentle invitations and conversations aimed at helping them make the right choices. However, at times this will not work and more drastic measures need to take place. What are those “more drastic measures?” Out-of-control anger and vengeful yelling is not the answer. Rather, a holy wrath that comes from mercy and love may be the key. This may come in the form of a strong chastisement or punishment. Or, it may come in the form of laying down the truth and clearly presenting the consequences of certain actions. Just remember that even this is love and is an imitation of Jesus’ actions. This is what we commonly refer to as “tough love.”

Reflect, today, on whether or not you need a rebuke from Jesus. If you do, let this Gospel of love sink in. Reflect also upon your responsibility in correcting the faults of others. Don’t be afraid to exercise an act of divine love that comes in the form of a clear chastisement. It may just be the key to helping those you love to love God all the more.

*Lord, help me to repent daily of my sin. Help me to be an instrument of the repentance of others. May I always receive Your words in love and offer them in the form of love that is most effective. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **Being Childlike**

### **Wednesday of the Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time**

“I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.” [Matthew 11:25](#)

Life is complicated. Or is it? That’s a good question. At times things can seem very complicated. Situations we find ourselves in, relationships with family and friends, our future, our past, etc., can all seem burdensome and complicated at times. But the truth is that it doesn’t have to be. The truth is that God’s answers to the most “complex” questions in life are often simple enough for a child to understand.

In the passage above, Jesus affirms that the Father reveals His answers and wisdom to those who are childlike. Interestingly, He also states that the Father has “hidden these things from the wise and learned.” So, this begs the question...is it better to be “wise and learned” or “childlike?” Obviously, the answer is that it’s better to be childlike.

This may seem confusing at first. It can seem strange to say that it’s not good to be “wise and learned.” But what that means is that it’s not good to be a person who thinks they have it all figured out. It’s not good to be arrogant and a know-it-all. It’s not good to be so filled with pride that we think we have all the answers.

The ideal is to have certain characteristics of a child. In particular, it’s good to be one who is open, curious, and willing to learn. It’s good to look at life in the simplest of ways and to stick to the basics. Sure, it’s good to grow in wisdom and knowledge of the things of God. But true wisdom and knowledge always maintain a certain innocence and simplicity. They maintain a basic goodness and acceptance of right and wrong. Life does not have to be complicated, it needs to become exceptionally simple.

Reflect, today, upon how ready and willing you are to turn to God for the simple and clear answers to life’s most difficult questions. Reflect upon how willing you are to turn to God in trust and hope knowing that God has all the answers to your life.

*Lord, once again I turn to You in trust. Help me to realize that all wisdom comes from You rather than myself. Help me to always turn to You as a child would and help my life to remain simple as You desire. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **Laying Down Your Burdens**

### **Thursday of the Fifteenth Week of Ordinary Time**

Jesus said: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” [Matthew 11:28](#)

This invitation from Jesus is one that we may need to hear far more often than we realize. It's a gentle invitation to let our Lord lighten our daily burden, relieve our worries, our stress, our concerns and all that weighs us down. It's an invitation of love and mercy and is one we should always accept.

What is it that burdens you? What is it that weighs you down and tempts you to fall into depression, sorrow or even despair? Is there something that you tend to think about obsessively? Is there some concern that you can't seem to shake? Whatever it is that troubles your heart, Jesus wants to lift it.

Sometimes we can go through life with heavy burdens that we are afraid to let go of. We can be fearful of coming to Jesus and fearful of letting Him in. Coming to Jesus means we must face whatever it is that burdens us with honesty and openness and we must face these burdens in the presence of Jesus.

But the key thing we need to know is that Jesus is gentle, merciful and generous in forgiveness and grace. He longs to lift our burdens far more than we long to have them lifted. He sees the oppression many faces and so deeply desires to have that oppression eliminated.

Reflect, today, upon that gentle invitation from Jesus: "Come to me." Come to Him without fear and without hesitation. Turn everything over to Him and let Him sort things out. He loves you more than you know and will set your feet on the right path.

*Lord, I do come to You and I do lay down my life and every burden before You. I give You my life, my hopes, my fears, my past, my future and everything that worries me. Jesus, I give You everything. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **I Desire Mercy**

### ***Friday of the Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time***

"If you knew what this meant, *I desire mercy, not sacrifice*, you would not have condemned these innocent men." [Matthew 12:7](#)

The Apostles of Jesus were hungry and they picked heads of grain as they walk along to satisfy their hunger. As a result, the Pharisees condemned the Apostles for doing what they claimed was "unlawful" on the Sabbath. They claimed that picking heads of grain as they walked along was considered "work" and, thus, they violated the law requiring rest on the Sabbath.

Really? Did the Pharisees seriously think that the Apostles sinned by picking grain as they walked along to satisfy their hunger? Hopefully it's not hard for us to see the absurdity and irrationality of this condemnation. The Apostles did nothing wrong but were condemned nonetheless. They were "innocent men" as Jesus points out. Jesus responds to the irrationality of the Pharisees by reminding them of the Scripture, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." And He points out that the Apostles were wrongly condemned because the Pharisees do not understand this passage and this command from God for mercy.

The Sabbath commandment to rest was from God. But the commandment to rest was not a requirement for its own sake. This was not some legal requirement that somehow honored God just by strictly keeping it. The Sabbath rest was primarily a gift from God to humanity in that God knew we needed rest and rejuvenation. He knew we needed time each week to slow down, offer special worship to God and enjoy the company of others. But the Pharisees turned the Sabbath rest into a burden. They made it out to be a strict legalistic observance that did nothing to glorify God or refresh the human spirit.

One key truth we can learn from this passage is that God calls us to interpret His law through the eyes of mercy. Mercy always refreshes us, lifts us up and fills us with new energy. It motivates us to worship and fills us with hope. Mercy does not impose a heavy legalistic burden upon us; rather, God's mercy and law together rejuvenates us and refreshes us.

Reflect, today, upon how you look at God's commands and His law. Do you see it as a legalistic and burdensome requirement? Or do you see it as a blessing of God's mercy meant to lighten your load?

*Lord, help me to love Your law. Help me to truly see it in the light of Your mercy and grace. May I be refreshed by all You command and be lifted up by Your will. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **Dealing with the Malice of Others**

### ***Saturday of the Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time***

The Pharisees went out and took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. [Matthew 12:14](#)  
If you really sit and think about this, it's shocking, sad and even scandalous. Here, the religious leaders of the time were actively, intentionally and calculatedly plotting to kill the Savior of the world. The very One whom they were supposed to be preparing for and hoping for became their object of malice, hatred and ultimate persecution.

It is shocking and, therefore, we should have a deep sorrow at their actions. But sorrow at their actions does not mean we need to fall into an irrational anger, despair or a mindset of revenge. Sorrow at the malicious actions of the Pharisees is actually a form of love toward them in that a deep sorrow at their actions is a way of calling them to repent.

Sure, this happened many years ago and the actual Pharisees who acted in this calculated and malicious way are no longer with us. Nonetheless, Jesus continues to be persecuted in numerous ways, and sometimes this persecution is even found among those who claim the name Christian and even those who act in leadership within our Church and world.

Practically speaking, we all may be able to identify in some way with the plotting and planning of Jesus' persecution. It would be highly unlikely that we experience this malice to the extent that Jesus did, but all of us have most likely experienced it to one extent or another.

Sadly, when we radically commit ourselves to Christ and His mission, we often become a target of the evil one. And very often, we experience the arrows of the evil one from those who should be our greatest supporters. Therefore, if this is your experience in some way, do not be scandalized or overly shaken. It's appropriate to be saddened by it, but don't give in to irrationality as a result. Persecution is a part of following Christ. It happened to Jesus and we should, therefore, expect it to happen to us.

Reflect, today, upon how you deal with the hurt and malice of others. You are not the one who is given the right to judge or condemn them. But you are called to experience the same sorrow that Jesus did. This sorrow is a holy sorrow which is spoken of in the Beatitudes. It's a sorrow which will enable you to reject the errors you encounter and grow in patience and endurance.

*Lord, when I feel ridiculed or persecuted by others, help me to stand strong in my faith and, especially, in my charity. Help me to allow a holy sorrow to strengthen me to have hope and to move forward in the mission You have given me. Jesus, I trust in You.*



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