

May 18-23: May 18 Monday: St. John I, Pope and Martyr:

(<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-john-i/>) **John 16: 29-**

33: *His disciples said, "Now you are talking plainly, and not in any figure of speech. 30 Now we realize that you know everything and that you do not need to have anyone question you. Because of this we believe that you came from God."* 31 Jesus answered them, "Do you believe now? 32 Behold, the hour is coming and has arrived when each of you will be scattered* to his own home and you will leave me alone. But I am not alone, because the Father is with me. 31 I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world*

Context: Jesus is speaking to his apostles after the Last Supper.

Scripture lessons: In this Last Supper discourse, Jesus explains his Divine origin and his relationship to God his Father in clear terms without using any metaphors. The apostles acknowledge that they understand the Divinity of Jesus. But Jesus prophesies that they will soon desert him and seek their own safety, while he will be arrested, brought to trial and crucified. Our Faith is tested every day when we live in a world filled with agnostics, atheists, and pleasure-seekers who see true believers as superstitious people and hate them. That is why Jesus gave his apostles and all his future disciples the assurance of the anointing of the Holy Spirit Who would strengthen them and guide them. The Second Vatican Council teaches in connection with this passage: "*The Lord Jesus who said 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John 16:33), did not by these words promise complete victory to his Church in this world. This sacred Council rejoices that the earth which has been sown with the seed of the Gospel is now bringing forth fruit in many places under the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, who is filling the world" (Presbyterorum Ordinis, 22).*

Life messages: 1) Our Faith is firmly rooted in the Divinity of Jesus demonstrated by his Messianic miracles, most of which were foretold by the prophets. The Resurrection of Jesus is the Miracle of miracles proving Jesus' Divinity beyond doubt. 2) We need to get our daily infusion of spiritual strength by recognizing the presence of God – the Father, the Son Incarnate, and the Holy Spirit -- living within us wherever we are, and by communicating with our indwelling God in prayer.

May 19 Tuesday: Jn 17:1-11a *1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee, 2 since thou hast given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. 4 I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gave me to do; 5*

The context: Today's Gospel passage is taken from the "High Priestly Prayer" which Jesus offered to the Father for himself, the apostles and all future believers at the end of his long Last Supper discourse. It is called the *High Priestly Prayer* because it is as the High Priest of the New Covenant that Jesus offers to God, his Father, the imminent sacrifice of his passion and death, to his apostles and their mission, and to all future believers.

Glory in crucifixion: In the first part of the prayer, Jesus asks for the glorification of his human nature and the acceptance of his sacrifice on the cross by his Father. Jesus considered his crucifixion as his glorification -- just as the martyrs would later do. The cross was the glory of Jesus because it was the completion of his double work of saving mankind and of demonstrating to us how much God loves us. Further, it was his death on the cross that led to his Resurrection in glory. Jesus glorified God 1) by accepting death on the cross in perfect obedience to God, to complete His eternal plan of salvation; 2) by revealing God to men as a loving, forgiving and saving Father; and 3) by giving believers Eternal Life in making them his disciples and teaching them to obey his new commandment of love.

The essence of Eternal Life: According to the New Testament, Eternal Life is: "*to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent*" (John 17:3). To "know" God in the Gospel sense is to have a deep, personal experience of God Who is working in one's life. It involves a close, intimate relationship which matures eventually into mutual love and trust. Christian Faith is essentially a "*believing in*"- a total surrender. It is the way we come to "*know*" Christ closely, to experience Him intimately, and to love Him personally.

Life messages: 1) Let us center our Christian life on prayer and the glorification of God. Prayer means getting into contact with God -- listening to Him and talking to Him. If we are convinced of the presence of God within us, we can talk to Him even

while we are driving, waiting in a queue, or doing routine work in the kitchen or yard. Our talk with God can include adoration, praise, thanksgiving, pleas for forgiveness for ourselves and for those who injure us and/or others, and prayer for the needs of others and of ourselves. A few minutes spent in reading the Bible is the best way of listening to God. We glorify God by obeying His commandments, especially the commandment of love given by Jesus.

May 20 Wednesday: St. Bernadine of Sienna, Priest:

(<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-bernardine-of-siena/>)

Jn 17:11b-19: *11 And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you did send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth*

In today's Gospel passage, taken from Jesus' *High-Priestly* prayer, Jesus prays in particular, for those disciples who are sharing the meal with him. The substance of that Prayer is a request for the victory, unity, protection, and consecration of his disciples. **(1)** Jesus prayed that they might find **victory** by living out their Christianity in the rough-and-tumble of life. The disciples were to win the world for Christ by living out their Christianity within the world. They must bear witness to Christ through their transparent Christian lives, reflecting Christ's love, mercy, forgiveness, and spirit of humble service. **(2)** Jesus prayed for the **unity** of his disciples. The world cannot be evangelized by competing Churches, and that is why Jesus prayed that his disciples might be as fully one as He and the Father are One. Christian unity is determined by whether and how well we love one another, and whether we reflect the love of God in Christ for the world. (Eph 4:4–6: ... *one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of us all, Who is above*

all and through all and in all). **(3)** Jesus prayed for His **Father's protection** for his disciples from the attacks of the Evil One. If the disciples of Christ fall, it is because they try to meet life with their own strength alone, and fail to recall consciously the presence of their protecting God and, so, to seek His help. **(4)** Jesus prayed that his disciples might be **consecrated in the Truth**. (a) **GOD alone IS TRUTH, and** to "Consecrate" means to set apart for a special task (Jer 1:5; Ex 28:41), namely to live out and to bear witness to **His TRUTH** in our lives; (b) to "Consecrate" also means **to equip** a man with the qualities of mind, heart, and character which are necessary for that task. God has chosen us and dedicated us for His special service of loving and obeying Him ourselves **and** of bringing others to do the same. c) He has not left us to carry out that great task with only our own strength, but by His grace He fits us for our task, if we place our lives in His hands.

Life messages: 1): We need to understand, appreciate, cooperate with, and pray with and for each other: The denominations are a reality. There is no use in our blaming each other for the historical events which caused these divisions in Christ's Body. What we can do is to learn sympathetically about the doctrinal similarities and differences among the members of our Christian community, and to learn to love each other, cooperating with the members of all denominations in all ways possible. 2) Let us pray fervently that God may show us how to proceed in building true and lasting Christian unity without sacrificing TRUTH, the basic Christian principles, and the teachings

May 21 Thursday: St. Christopher Magallanes, Priest & companion-martyrs:
<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-cristobal-magallanes-and-companions/>

Jn 17:20-26: *20 "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. 24 ...*

The context: Today's Gospel passage is the concluding part of Jesus' "High Priestly

Prayer” in his Last Supper discourse. Here, Jesus prays for true unity among his followers who accept him as their Lord and Savior.

Divisions in Christianity: The first major division in Christianity, which took place in the fifth century, was the schism caused when the Eastern Orthodox Churches under the patriarchs who separated themselves from the Western Church under the Pope. Next, the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century separated its followers from unity with the Church centered in Rome and freed them from her Authority. During the following five centuries, this separation resulted in the formation of more than 30,000 Protestant denominations. According to Pope St. Paul VI [canonized October 14, 2018 by Pope Francis] *“the Church founded by Jesus Christ and for which he prayed is indefectibly one in Faith, in worship and in the bond of hierarchical communion” (Creed of the People of God, 21).*

Jesus’ prayer for unity: In his prayer for unity among his disciples, Jesus mentions that the basis and criterion of unity must be the Unity of God in His Three Divine Persons among Whom there is eternal, mutual love and Self-giving/receiving. The unity of Jesus and his Father is, essentially, a unity of love and obedience and a unity of personal relationship. Another reason for Christian unity is the union of the faithful with Jesus Christ in His Mystical Body by Baptism, and through Him with the Father (verse 23). This means that the fullness of Unity is attained through Sanctifying grace, the Life of God, which comes to us from the Father through Christ (cf. Jn 15:5). Jesus declares that unity among the believers is essential if the world is to acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior, because the disunity among Christians acts as the biggest block for evangelization, for it offers living, constant counter-witness to the Good News of Redemption.

Life messages: 1) Since Jesus Christ himself left us his final wish for unity through his prayer to the Father: *“that they may all be one; even as You, Father are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me” (Jn 17:21)*, it is our duty to pray and work for meaningful unity among Christians. 2) Let us learn to appreciate each other’s common beliefs and enter into genuine dialogue and cooperation with members of other Christian denominations, instead of accusing each other of heresy. 3) We need to remember that the present non-Catholic Christians are not responsible for the historical events and actions from which the various denominations originated in the past.

May 22 Friday: St. Rita of Cascia, religious:

[\(https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-rita-of-cascia/](https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-rita-of-cascia/)

(Jn:21:15-19); 15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would;..19

The context: This is a post-Resurrection apparition scene. After miraculously providing breakfast for his apostles who had been fishing all night, Jesus conferred on Peter the Primacy in his Church, which Jesus had previously promised as a reward for Peter's profession of Faith (Mt 16:16-19).

The triple question: As if to give him a triple chance to atone for his triple denial, Jesus asks Peter, three times, "Simon, son of John, do you love me (**agápe love**) more than these?" Jesus asks Peter if he loves Jesus more than he loves his boat and fishing equipment, occupation, family, and friends. Jesus is also asking whether Peter loves him more than the other Apostles do. Instead of boasting of his own fidelity, strength, and greater love, as he had done before his triple denial of the Master, Peter humbly puts everything in Christ's hands. "Lord, You know well that I love (**philia love**=love of a friend) You."

The dual reward: 1) Primacy of jurisdiction over the Church was formally defined by the First Vatican Council (Vatican I) in the First Dogmatic Constitution "On the Church of Christ," (Pastor Aeternus, Chapter 1) declaring, "We therefore teach and declare that, according to the testimony of the Gospel, the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church of God was immediately and directly promised and given to Blessed Peter the Apostle by Christ our Lord. [...] And it was upon Simon Peter alone, that Jesus, after his Resurrection, bestowed the jurisdiction of chief pastor and ruler over all his fold in the words: 'Feed My lambs; feed My sheep (Jn 21:15-17).'" 2) Peter was also given the promise of a martyr's death because real love involves responsibility as well as sacrifice. According to Tradition, St. Peter followed his Master to the point of dying by crucifixion -- head downwards, because he felt

unworthy to die as Jesus had done. This happened during Nero's persecution of the Christians, which took place between the years 64 and 68 in Rome.

Life messages: 1) We need to pray for the Pope, the successor of Peter, and for the bishops, the successors of the Apostles, and to support them in their ministry. 2) Jesus is a God of second chances Who gives chance after chance to sinners to return to his love, as is made clear by Jesus' conferring primacy in his Church on the repentant Peter

May 23 Saturday: Jn 21:20-25: *20 Peter turned and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved, who had lain close to his breast at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" 23 The saying spread abroad among the brethren that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" 24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true. 25 But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*

Context: Today's Gospel passage describes the role of Peter as the chief shepherd of Christ's people and of John as a long-lived witness to Christ in the early Church. The last part of the passage was intended to correct the false notion in the early Church that John would not die until the much-expected, imminent "second coming" of Jesus.

Jesus' reply: Jesus' response implies that what is important is not to be curious about what the future will bring one but to serve the Lord faithfully each day, keeping to the way He has marked out for one.

John's testimony about his Gospel: The passage concludes with John's testimony about the truth of the content of his Gospel. It also explains the purpose of John's Gospel: to strengthen our Faith in what Jesus did and taught. In addition, it tells us that the written Gospels contain only a fraction of what Jesus taught and did, implying that we have to depend upon the Sacred Tradition of the early Church handed down to us by the early Fathers of the Church to complete the truth of the written testimony.

Life message: 1) Just as Peter and John each had his unique role in Christ's Church, so each believer, as a member of this Mystical Body of Christ, each one of us with our differing talents, strengths, weaknesses, and limits, has one's own particular work to do in completing the task of the Mystical Body of Christ (The Church) – bringing the world to Christ and Christ to the world. Hence, it is our duty to bear witness to Christ by surrendering our lives to Christ on the altar of service for the people of God and by offering ourselves as humble instruments in the hands of Christ.

FR. TONY

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