

# Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul And the Shrine of Saint Katharine Drexel

18th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Philadelphia*



**August 25, 2019**

## **Parish Mission Statement**

As a vibrant Roman Catholic community in Center City, the Cathedral Parish Serves all those who come to the Mother Church of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. We profess our Catholic Faith, minister to others and welcome all, as founded on the Word of God and the celebration of the Sacraments of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

*Adopted by the Parish Council, April 5, 2016*

**Reverend Gerald Dennis Gill**  
**Rector and Pastor**

**Reverend Monsignor Arthur E. Rodgers**  
**Rector Emeritus**

**Reverend Matthew K. Biedrzycki**  
**Parochial Vicar**

**Reverend Monsignor Louis A. D'Addezio**  
**Reverend Isaac Haywiser, O.S.B.**  
**Priests in Residence**

**Deacon Epifanio de Jesus**

**Sister Eleanor McCann, R.S.M.**  
**Pastoral Associate**

**Sister Mary Luchia, P.V.M.I**  
**Parish Evangelization**

**Charlene Angelini**  
**Director of Cathedral Parish Music**

**Mark Loria**  
**Principal Organist**

**Edward J. Specht IV**  
**Coordinator of Religious Education**

**The Cathedral Shop is open**  
**Wed. 10:30 AM - 2:00 PM / Sat. 11:00 AM - 5:15 PM**  
**Sun. 10:30 AM - 6:30 PM / 215-665-9032**

## **MASS SCHEDULE**

**Sunday:** 5:15 PM Anticipated Mass on Saturday  
8:00 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:00 AM in Basilica  
12:30 PM Spanish in Cathedral Chapel  
Sta. Misa en español, en la Capilla  
6:30 PM in Basilica

**Weekdays:** 7:15 AM, 12:05 PM in Cathedral Chapel

**Saturdays:** 12:05 PM in Cathedral Chapel

**Holy Days:** See website

## **SACRAMENT OF PENANCE SCHEDULE**

**Sunday:** 9:00 AM and 5:30 PM in Basilica  
12:00 PM (español) en la Capilla

**Weekdays:** 11:30 AM in Basilica

**Saturday:** 4:15 to 5:00 PM in Basilica

Please contact the Parish Office to arrange for the:  
**SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM AND MARRIAGE,**  
**SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK,**  
**AND HOLY COMMUNION OF THE SICK**  
**AND HOMEBOUND**

Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter & Paul   
[@CathedralPhila](https://www.facebook.com/CathedralPhila) 

**Parish Office Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM (lunch break 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM)**  
**1723 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 • 215-561-1313 • [www.cathedralphila.org](http://www.cathedralphila.org) • [info@cathedralphila.org](mailto:info@cathedralphila.org)**

# Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday, August 25, 2019

*"I am the way, the truth and the life, says the Lord; no one comes to the Father, except through me"*

*Jn 14:6*

## Mass Intentions for the Week



### Aug 24, Saturday, St. Bartholomew

- 12:05 Leone, Cuccurullo, Kenny Families  
5:15 Margaret Dobie

### Aug 25, Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

- 8:00 For the People of the Parish  
9:30 Alessandro Iavarone  
11:00 Robert Cholminski, Jr.  
12:30 Antolio Alvarez  
6:30 For the People of the Archdiocese

### Aug 26, Monday, Weekday

- 7:15 Thomas J. Ferrero  
12:05 Harold Kistler

### Aug 27, Tuesday, St. Monica

- 7:15 Jose Cornejo, Sr.  
12:05 Joel Fields

### Aug 28, Wednesday, St. Augustine

- 7:15 Jessie R. Ross  
12:05 Leo Nadeau

### Aug 29, Thursday, The Passion of St. John the Baptist

- 7:15 Nicholas Cianci, Jr.  
12:05 Stanley Louis

### Aug 30, Friday, Weekday

- 7:15 Mary Ann Garner  
12:05 William Matthews, Jr.

### Aug 31, Saturday, Weekday, BVM

- 12:05 Dorothy Madden  
5:15 Edward Killian

### Sep 1, Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

- 8:00 For the People of the Parish  
9:30 Libero "Lee" Gardella  
11:00 Karen Vonysdow  
12:30 Oscar y Bobby Nava  
6:30 For the People of the Archdiocese

Dear Parishioners,

*"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough (Luke 13, 24)."* These words of Jesus to us from today's Holy Gospel might be perplexing for some. The Father sent his only begotten Son into the world to suffer, die and be raised up for the salvation of all. Yet, the Lord speaks of the narrow gate, a metaphor for the path to salvation, which for some will be difficult to enter. Is there a contradiction here? Did the Lord come to save us all or didn't he? Yes, the Lord does desire that all people be with him one day in heaven for all eternity. And, the Lord has accomplished this possibility with his saving death and resurrection. However, our salvation does not rest on the Lord's divine work alone. We have a part to play, a very important part. Salvation is a free gift from the Lord and not a guarantee. It is a gift generously given by the Lord. The narrowness of the gate, the path to salvation, speaks to us and our response to the Lord's gift. Our response includes our acceptance of the love of the Lord for us with lives faithful to his commandments and seeking his will in all things. When we put the Lord aside the gate becomes even more narrow. We can even close the gate. Let us pray that we may trust in the mercy of the Lord to keep us in his way and have the strength of his grace to follow this way through the saving gate!

*Our parishioner, Emma Dickinson, prepares over the next few weeks to enter the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal.* You can learn more about the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal through their website, <https://www.franciscansisterscfr.com/>. Emma has been a very active member of our Parish over the last few years, especially through our parish young adult group, as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and as part of the leadership team for the Christian Initiation of Adults. Most of all, she is a vibrant Christian woman who has discerned her call from Christ to the Consecrated Life here in our Parish Community. As much as this is a wonderful moment in Emma's life, it is also a blessed moment for our Parish. I invite you to keep Emma very much in your prayers over the next few weeks. Also, let us not forget our Carmelite parishioner and our four seminarians in our prayers. This is a rich time for vocations to the Holy Priesthood and the Consecrated Life for our Cathedral Parish.

*Looking ahead, we have some significant celebrations during the Sacred Liturgy for the month of September.* At the 11:00 AM Solemn Mass on September 8, 2019, Religious from throughout the Archdiocese celebrating Jubilees will be present for Mass. Catechetical Sunday is September 15, 2019, and our parish catechists will receive a blessing for their work at the 11:00 AM Solemn Mass. The annual Blue Mass—for Police, Firefighters and Peace Officers—will be the 9:30 AM Mass on Sunday, September 22, 2019. The Archdiocesan Respect Life Observance will be at the 6:30 PM Mass on Sunday, September 29, 2019. When a special observance takes place at a Sunday Mass with reserved pews in the center aisle, the pews in both transepts are reserved for our parishioners.

*Monday, September 2, 2019 is Labor Day.* Mass will be celebrated at 9:00 AM in the Cathedral Chapel. Following Mass, everyone is welcome to join in praying the Holy Rosary at the Queen of Apostles Garden directly behind the Basilica. The Basilica and Parish Office will be closed on Labor Day.

*Next Sunday, the second collection will be directed to the liturgical music program of the Cathedral Basilica.* If possible, please make use of the on-line possibility of making your weekly offering. Thank you so very much for all of your goodness and generosity to the Cathedral Parish and to the Appeal for Catholic Charities. God bless you, Father Dennis Gill

*Saints on Mission Summer Series*  
*The Queenship of Mary*



**Monday, August 26, 2019**  
**6:00 PM**

Drexel Hall (Below the Chapel)

Mary is the most well-known and influential woman in the history of the human race. No other woman has churches, states, cities, and roads named after her as does Mary.

No other woman has processions in her honor, novenas prayed to her, conferences to study her, or statues to commemorate her as does the Blessed Mother. She is unparalleled among us, to the point where we call her our Queen. But why this fascination? How has Mary been able to capture the hearts of minds of men and women generation after generation? And what might her life teach us today, especially in terms of the mission of the Church?

**Speaker:**

Kelly Anderson, professor of Biblical Studies at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary

The Pontifical Mission Societies, Philadelphia  
To RSVP please visit [phillymissions.org/signup](http://phillymissions.org/signup)  
Questions? Call 215-587-3944

**FIRST FRIDAY EXPOSITION OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT**

*Adoración Eucarística el primer viernes del mes*

**Friday, September 1, 2019**

**12:35 PM to 1:30 PM**

**Cathedral Chapel**

**The Most Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for adoration after the 12:05 PM Mass.**

*Please come to adore the Lord!*

**The Sacrament of Penance will be available on the First Friday of each month, beginning at 11:30AM**

**Please note that going forward we have changed the format and timing of the first Friday Holy Hours so that more people can participate.**

*El Santísimo Sacramento será expuesto para adoración después de la Misa de las 12:05 pm el 1er viernes de cada mes a partir de las 11:30 am en la Capilla de la Catedral. Confesiones en inglés a las 11am. Por favor ven a adorar al Señor*

**“Our hours of adoration will be special hours of reparation for sins, and intercession for the needs of the whole world, exposing the sin-sick and suffering humanity to the healing, sustaining and transforming rays of Jesus, radiating from the Eucharist.”**

**Readings for Mass for this Week**

Please see the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: [usccb.org/bible/readings](http://usccb.org/bible/readings)

**Tours of the Cathedral Basilica**

A guided tour of the Basilica is available **after the 11:00 AM Sunday Mass**. Please gather in front of the Side Altar of the Sacred Heart, which is located to the right of the Main Sanctuary.



**PARISH FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The Financial Support of the Cathedral Parish is the duty of our parishioners. Here at the Cathedral Parish we are greatly supported as well by our many visitors. The offertory collection for Sunday 8/18/19 will be published in a future edition of the bulletin. **Thank you very much for your generous financial support to the Cathedral Parish.**

**Catholic Intellectual Life**

ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

**The Cardinals' Forum - "Empty Pews" and the Future of Catholic Parishes**

**Tuesday, August 27, 2019 - 7:00-8:30 PM**

An annual gathering that advances the academic formation of seminary students and provides continuing education for the lay faithful about a topic of contemporary concern

**Speakers:** Dr. John Haas, Fr. Thomas Dailey, OSFS, Dr. Nathan Knutson, Archbishop Charles Chaput OFM Cap

**Location:** St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Vianney Hall Auditorium, Wynnewood

More info: <https://www.scs.edu/cardinals-forum>

**Please remember these parishioners and friends of the Cathedral Parish in your prayers/ Ora por los enfermos:**

*William Zawacki, Judy Miller, Rose McKenna, McKinley Angelucci, Mary Jo D'Ortone, Amanda Razzano, Jaelin Liver, Steve Cook, Daniel Moyer Sr., Gloria Quici, Michele Smith, Louise Quattrone, Phoenix McFetridge, Laura Bernal, Sophie Monterosso, Ryley Nazario, Terry Dynako, Dave Dynako, Greg Lund, Corbin M. Schindler, John McGrath, Paige Bednarsky, Ted Johnston, Dolores Bearden, Michael Piotrowski, Beverly Martin, Evan C. Farrington, Darcel Burney, Sergia Hernandez, Marcia Clark, Fruma Ludwig, John Cantwell, Jr., Jeffrey Press, Daniel Kilpatrick, Carol Snipes, Eileen & Herbert Luscomb, Teresa Mirabelli, Janice Holshin, Rose Rippe, Russell Heim, Karen Spadaccini, Pearl Hammond, Mary W., James Pinto, Joan Decker, George Gunning, April DeMatto, Laura Kerr, Cris Burbage, Robin Abate, Bryan Anderson, Glen, and those in nursing homes or hospitals and all the sick. Please call the Parish Office with the name of anyone who is sick, to be included in our prayer list. Por favor llamar a la oficina parroquial para añadir a la lista los nombres de personas que estén enfermas.*

## What's Happening at the Parish Outside the Liturgical Schedule

- Aug 25** Legion of Mary Meeting, APC, 12:45PM  
Prayer group in Spanish, NR, 1:50 PM
- Aug 27** Adult Faith Sharing, Neumann Room, 2PM
- Aug 28** Scripture Reflection for lawyers, NR, 8 AM  
Charismatic Prayer Group, NR, 6 PM
- Sep 2** Basilica and Parish Office Closed,  
Chapel to close after 9 AM Mass
- Sep 8** Religious Jubilarian Mass, Basilica, 11 AM
- Sep 15** [Remain in My Love](#), mini marriage conference,  
Chapel, 2 PM
- Sep 22** [Blue Mass](#), Basilica, 9:30 AM

## EVENTOS DE INTERÉS

### ¡HOY! Grupo de Oración

**Domingo 25 de agosto, 2019**

1:50-2:50 PM en el Salón Neumann, detrás de la Catedral

### TALLER PRE CANÁ

**Noviembre: Sábado 9 & domingo 10**

Centro Pastoral Arquidiocesano 222 N. 17 St. Philadelphia, PA 19103 Entrada por la Calle 17 El Taller Pre-Caná consiste de dos días. Por favor, reserven las fechas. Para información y registración: Blanca Herrera - 215-667-2820/2824 Email: [bherrera@archphila.org](mailto:bherrera@archphila.org)

### TALLER QUINCEAÑERAS

**Sábado 14 de septiembre**

Lugar: Centro Pastoral Arquidiocesano 222 N. 17 Street., Philadelphia, PA 19103 (Entrada al estacionamiento y el edificio por la Calle 17) Para registración e información: Blanca Herrera - 215-667-2820 Email: [bherrera@archphila.org](mailto:bherrera@archphila.org)

### TEN MISERICORDIA DE NOSOTROS, OH DIOS

**Hora Santa de Reparacion y Peticion**

**Hoy, Domingo 15 de septiembre, 2019, de 5:30 a 6:30 PM**

**Lugar:** En la Basilica

Arquidiócesis de Filadelfia - [archphila.org/vigil](http://archphila.org/vigil)

### La Misa Azul

**Domingo, 22 de septiembre de 2019**

Acompañanos a orar por los policías, bomberos, y paramédicos que sirven a nuestra comunidad. Agradecemos su compromiso y dedicación por el bien común.

Lugar: La Basílica



*Conferencia de Mujeres Catolicas 2019*

**Sábado, 26 de octubre, 2019**

Santuario Nacional de Czestochowa,  
Doylestown, PA

¡Compra tus boletos cuanto antes!

[www.catholicwomensconference.org](http://www.catholicwomensconference.org)

## LA LUCHA

Si nos pidieran que mencionáramos a un santo o una santa de nuestra época muchos de nosotros diríamos: “La Madre Teresa”. Nacida en Albania, comenzó su vida religiosa en una congregación de hermanas maestras, que la envió a enseñar en una escuela de niñas en Calcuta, en la India. Se quedó consternada al ver la pobreza tan deprimente que había por todos lados. En 1948 respondió con una fe incontestable al llamado interior de dejar la congregación de religiosas maestras e ir a servir a los desamparados en los suburbios de Calcuta. Muy pronto otras mujeres se unieron a la Madre Teresa y a sus obras de misericordia. Así se formó la congregación de las Misioneras de la Caridad. En el transcurso de los siguientes cincuenta años la Madre Teresa fue reconocida mundialmente como un símbolo de compasión y galardonada con el Premio Nobel de la Paz. Un libro publicado después de su muerte, cuyo contenido son cartas escritas por ella a amigos, superiores y confesores, revela que esta pequeña y vigorosa monja había pasado largos años en un desierto espiritual. Ella tenía un anhelo profundo de Dios, pero no sentía fe, amor o fervor. Su fama aumentó pero, excepto por unas breves semanas en 1958, su fe no volvió. Dejó escrito que su sonrisa era una máscara mientras luchaba inmensamente para ver qué valor tenía su obra, y que si no había Dios, tampoco podía haber alma y Jesús no es el Cristo. Hasta dejó de rezar por un tiempo porque no le parecía tener sentido. Aparentemente la Madre Teresa murió con sus dudas en 1997. Algunos ateos prominentes han dicho que esas cartas demuestran que toda fe religiosa es una farsa. Para aquellos de nosotros que luchamos con nuestra fe, el heroísmo de esa mujer nos anima. Al igual que san Juan de la Cruz, santa Teresa de Ávila y muchos otros, ella siguió haciendo la voluntad de Dios a pesar de su oscuridad espiritual. Su último deseo fue que se destruyeran sus cartas, pero la Iglesia decidió guardarlas. Tal vez ahora sabemos por qué.

### La Corresponsabilidad Viva Ahora

Si alguien expresa dudas acerca de la fe y de las creencias religiosas, no discutan con ellos. Más bien digan palabras de aliento y oren por esas personas.

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### #CaticosHispanosPhilly

Visítanos, dale «me gusta» y comparte con nosotros en el mundo virtual, utilizando el hashtag

#CaticosHispanosPhilly en la página «Arquidiócesis de Filadelfia - Católicos Hispanos» o en el siguiente enlace:

[www.facebook.com/CaticosHispanosPhill](http://www.facebook.com/CaticosHispanosPhill)

**Nuestra Señora del Encuentro Radio y TV**

[nseradio.com](http://nseradio.com) [www.youtube.com/user/nsetvradio](http://www.youtube.com/user/nsetvradio)



## AID FOR FRIENDS

**Cooking for your family? Make a little extra for those in need, freeze it and bring it to the parish.**

Meal trays with instructions are available in the side entrance to the Chapel. Frozen trays may be dropped off in the Sacristy before/after any weekend Mass.

Questions? Email Carmin de Jesus at [epi.dejesusjr@gmail.com](mailto:epi.dejesusjr@gmail.com).

*Aid For Friends* is a non-profit organization that seeks volunteers to prepare meals in their homes and/or to deliver food for those unable to prepare their own meals. These prepared meals are a tremendous service to the elderly and disabled who cannot afford their meals or have difficulty getting to the food store.

One step further:

If you are interested in *taking meals to the homebound*, especially in the Cathedral Parish area, please contact Mrs. Lynn Trumbetta, by phone (215-464-2224) or email [afflynnt@yahoo.com](mailto:afflynnt@yahoo.com). You must first register with *Aid For Friends* to deliver meals. *Aid for Friends* encourages a visit with the persons receiving the meal as well. [aidforfriends.org](http://aidforfriends.org)

### CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF SAINTS PETER & PAUL

## DURUFLÉ REQUIEM MASS

NOVEMBER 2, 2019 - 2:30PM



*"Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine"*

**Come gather in communal remembrance of our deceased loved ones who have gone before us.**

**The Cathedral Parish will present  
Maurice Duruflé's *Requiem*,  
to be sung as part of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.**

**In order to experience the full beauty of the *Requiem*,  
we are in need of sponsors to help financially sponsor  
the music for this Mass.**

**All who donate will be given the opportunity to have  
the names of deceased loved ones included  
in the In Memoriam section of the worship  
aid for this Mass.**

**To donate please use the QR code or visit**

[cathedralphila.org/music](http://cathedralphila.org/music)



## Jesus' Disciples for Today

Have you ever found yourself overwhelmed by daily news to the point where your mind and heart are somehow removed from important things at hand in your own life? Such preoccupations can rob us of great energy in our day-to-day lives and make it quite easy to become distracted by situations which are beyond our control. Our world in many ways is at our fingertips through the internet and other means of communication, but, lest we forget, we are free to decide how we want to use our own time; a great challenge for this age of instant information and for those who are looking to use their time in critically meaningful ways. Maybe now we should ask that question: How do I want to best to use my time? As a follower of Jesus living in this century, during these days of plenty for some, and nothing for many, which road do I choose to take?

Our Sunday Gospels at this point in Year C are taken from Saint Luke's Chapters 12 – 15. The Evangelist calls us to live with the "other" in mind. He is clear in calling us to live selflessly, and to be ready to realize that the values of faithfulness and sacrifice in our relationships, are worthy elements on which they are built. When Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep which is sought out, leaving the 99 behind, He is making it clear how tenderly He loves each one of us, and that is the model for our own loving relationships with each other. Do I deserve such love from Jesus? What an example and gift He gives to us! Such inner spiritual dynamics are central to the mindset of a disciple of Christ. We are reminded that we do not know the day nor the hour, when we will be called to face our God. This means that a watchful heart, one reaching out to the most vulnerable of God's people, is needed. We must as well, be ready to live with the mysteries of faith and the ambiguities of not understanding God's designs but trusting in God's plan.

This could be a demanding spiritual journey, but our Sacramental life carries us through these challenges. We cannot do such rigorous things on our own without the Eucharist and a prayerful life style. Luke reminds us of not accumulating things of this world, but things of heaven. This graced way of being may lead us in a new direction where our desires begin to shift to a regular concern for others. We may soon realize that inner strength seems to come from a line of the Psalms, or from one of Jesus' teachings or stories, a phrase from a hymn which speaks to our heart, or from any one of our many prayers. These interior resources can help to fortify us when we are about to make a choice that seems to have come from God. Our spiritual mindset begins to grow in a direction which points toward the other. Dare we think that the other may be Christ Himself? In faith, let us take on that mysterious challenge, or even some regular simple acts of kindness.

***Saints Peter and Paul and Saint Katharine Drexel, pray  
for us!***

Sister Eleanor McCann, RSM

## *The Memorial of the Passion of St. John the Baptist*

August 24, 2015 by Rev. John Henry Hanson, O. Praem.

*“It’s hard! — Yes, I know. But, forward! No one will be rewarded — and what a reward! — except those who fight bravely.”*

ST. JOSE MARIA ESCRIVA  
*The Way*, no. 720

“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). To be in God’s hands, to be praised and approved by Christ, to be respected by all—even by the one who arrested and imprisoned you—and yet to be so apparently abandoned by God. This seems to be the fate of St John the Baptist. He was left to sit in a prison cell, and then to be beheaded because of the impulsiveness of a king, the malice of a mother, and the caprice of a daughter. It seems like such an unheroic, anticlimactic, abrupt end for him whom our Lord praised *as the greatest among the sons of women*.

This must be the foolishness of the cross and the weakness of God at work together.

We have to consider this carefully, we who are also friends of the bridegroom. How does Christ save? Not always by rescue. He fortifies the human heart to surrender, to lay down its life freely. *No greater love exists than that a man lay down his life for his friends*. And the power that makes that surrender possible is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, from whom, in spirit, St John was never separated.

The opening prayer for the memorial of the *Passion of St John the Baptist* asks God for this grace: “Grant that we, too, may fight hard,” in other words, *Grant that we might fight valiantly for Christ as did the holy Baptist*. Each of us is up against something that requires us to “fight hard,” from ordinary human weakness to temptations to sin. We know that the victory belongs to Christ, but we also have this lingering fear: I know that I can, but I’m afraid that I won’t. I know that I can do all things in Him who strengthens me, but I’m afraid that I will back out and not fight hard.

In the Gospel of St John’s beheading, we can picture everything. There are some unique elements: the movements of a dance and the sounds of the music that accompanied it. Food is being served to many. There is a lot of drinking, a lot of foolish conversation, sinful propositions, swearing, laughter. This is a crowd of people who are not fighting hard to do anything good. We find ourselves in the midst of all types of self-indulgence: gluttony, lust, drunkenness. Then behind the scenes there is anger, retaliation, manipulation, fear, human respect. It is the ugly portrait of unredeemed humanity.

But there is one man in this Herodian palace who wants nothing to do with the celebration and the sins that it occasions. Herod’s banquet is not the wedding supper of the Lamb, and yet for one man it is. For one man alone it is the passage from bondage to freedom. It is his Passover meal.

There is one man here who believes in Jesus Christ. He believes so wholeheartedly in Christ that he is waiting in prison, prepared to give his life for Him at a moment’s notice. He is sober, self-controlled, alone, praying incessantly. While hundreds of people enjoy themselves above him—eating, drinking, laughing, singing, and dancing—St John the Baptist sits in chains.

This was a grand birthday party, and so we can expect that St John heard the sounds of the celebration echoing throughout the palace, echoing off of the walls of his dungeon cell. He is praying and at the same time the air about him is filled with the smells of food and the perfumes of the guests. He can hear the music, the men hollering, peals of laughter.

When we are at our best, when are fighting hard within ourselves for Christ, when we are doing battle against our own enemies, when we remember or imagine the attractions of the world, and yet are clinging to Christ within, then this is who we are in this Gospel scene. We are like St John the Baptist. And this is what our opening prayer is asking for.

In his lonely prison cell, St John the Baptist quietly trusts in the Lamb of God—who is physically absent, yet mystically present to him in power. The Baptist does not believe for a minute in the boisterous sounds of false human happiness bombarding him from all sides. Quietly, hiddenly, he trusts in the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He trusts in the same divine Lamb who takes away our fears to do battle and enables us to fight hard for Him, and with Him, to overcome the world.

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