September 27, 2026 Homily
Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/092726.cfm

Our Second Reading today is a hymn composed by St. Paul, and sent to the Philippians, a church that was enduring persecution and facing disunity within their own ranks. Unity is always a struggle in the Church. Church people are not necessarily people who agree with one another. They are people who have learned to be in communion with one another and value their differences. Church divisions come easy. Sometimes they arise from the usual suspects: age, income, education, musical taste, culture, language, political party, and so on. Paul sees the divisions in the Church and he does not give orders, he responds pastorally. Paul sees this conflict as an opportunity to reflect upon the theological affirmation of the mind of Christ.

Paul calls the Philippians and us to be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. The phrase "think the same thing," is not a call for uniform opinions, but for a shared orientation, centered in the mind of Christ. And then Paul describes how Jesus humbled himself to the point of death for our salvation. Then God exalted his Crucified Son to begin the divine reversal that His Kingdom brings about: The last will be first, the humble will be exalted, and those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Paul doesn't simply teach doctrine - he teaches theology. He proclaims the shape of Christ's life and tells us, "This is the shape your life should take too." Paul basically calls the Phillippians to forget about themselves for a moment and be more focused on Jesus. Isn't it a great message for us? Paul is calling us all, not simply to believe in Jesus, but to think like Jesus, love like Jesus, and move through the world the way Jesus did.

Dear brothers and sisters, the world is filled with divisions; racial, political, economic, cultural, and religious. And we are here because we are called to be an example of what God can do in the midst of our differences. St. Gabriel has existed for 90 years as a living testimony to the unity that only Christ can bring. This church is not built by affinity of thought, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, a power that allows us to overcome divisions among us. The unity of the Church is fragile, so we should always keep this in mind: We should not involved in ministry, in liturgy or in evangelization, until we all have committed ourselves to become Christ. And this is what St. Paul is telling the Philippians and us: In a Christian community, we are not to grasp at power,

we are to empty ourselves in service. Let's empty ourselves. No matter what we do for this community, it becomes deeply meaningful if it contributes to the unity and harmony among us. The diversity of this community enriches our spirituality is so many ways: We are the body of Christ. If Jesus Christ is our focus, we will never break the essence of this community, which is, unity and harmony in the midst of our diversity.

Today the Church celebrates the day of Immigrants and Refugees. It is an opportunity to learn how to value each person's unique contribution to the harmony of this community and to remember that Jesus Christ has valued each of us and placed us in this family. The beauty of our multilingual celebrations is that even though different, we all worship together in spirit and in truth to the God who calls us to be part of this beautiful family. Next weekend we celebrate our diversity with the International Food Festival. It is not only about food, or sales, or fun. It is about recognizing our differences, and strengthening our unity in Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Tax collectors and prostitutes said no to God in the past, but once they met Jesus, they converted. This is a message of hope for us all: We may fail in our efforts to obey our Lord, but if we are open to conversion, to change, then, we will be on our way towards God's Kingdom. Every effort for communion and harmony among us shows that we obey the God who called us to live as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Universal Prayer
Sunday September 27th, 2026
Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
World Day of Migrant and Refugee Sunday

Celebrant:
Sisters and brothers, today we mark the 112th World Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees with its theme, even just one of these children, giving a focus on children and teenagers who are forced to flee their homes and land.

1. May Pope Leo, on his pilgrimage to Lourdes today, gathering the people for the Eucharist and participating in the evening torchlight procession in honor of Mary, strengthen the faith and charity of the people.
   We pray to the Lord.

2. May those who gather with Pope Leo today, the sick and those who care for them, the bishops of France, the contemplative religious and the survivors of abuse experience, be renewed in hope.

   We pray to the Lord.

3. May we remember today, the vast number of children and teenagers from places of war, violence, poverty, and natural disasters, who are now so vulnerable that they are kept safe, physically, morally and spiritually, and find a new life of security and opportunity.

   We pray to the Lord.

4. May refugees and migrants, who have bought to our land and to our Church, a rich diversity of culture and faith, of resilience and hope, be welcomed as sisters and brothers, as together we shape this country into a place of harmony where racism has no place.

   We pray to the Lord.

5. May every effort take place to bring present wars to an end, so that putting aside hatred, ambition and greed, all will be led by the Holy Spirit to seek peace and justice.

   We pray to the Lord.

6. May there be an increase in the number of vocations to religious life in the order of Daughters of St. Mary of Guadalupe, and to the priesthood in the Diocese of Raleigh:

   We pray to the Lord.

7. May those who have died in the process of seeking a new life in safe lands, find through the mercy of God, a home in the heavenly kingdom.

   We pray to the Lord.

<u>Celebrant:</u>

Lord, your word is truth for us, a guide for justice, an energy for mercy, a blessing for peace; be merciful to all people, mindful especially young refugees who are now homeless, destitute and fearful, and who feel abandoned with no place to call home.

Through Christ our Lord.