

Week 31



THE ROSARY IN A YEAR

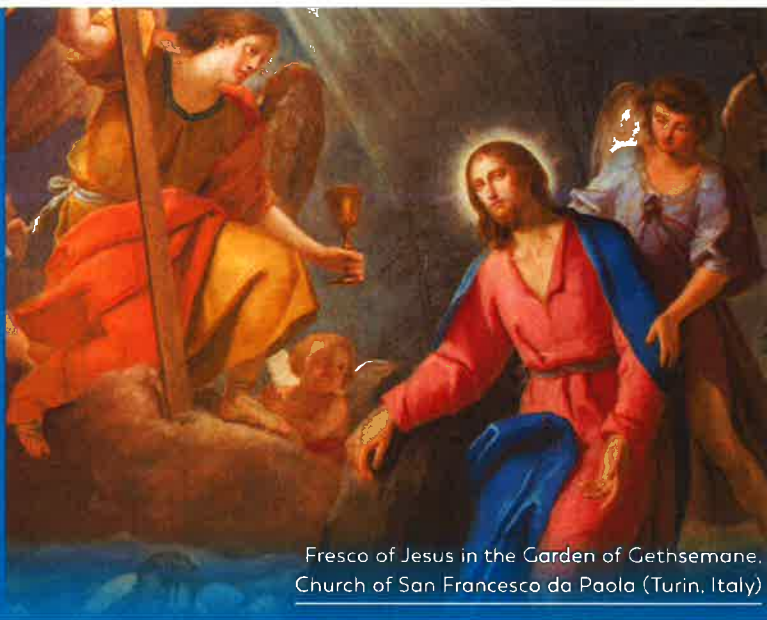
WITH FR. MARK-MARY AMES, CFR

PHASE 3: MEDITATING ON THE MYSTERIES

Praying with Sacred Art

VISIO DIVINA:

Go deeper into the Rosary through “divine seeing.”



Fresco of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane,
Church of San Francesco da Paola (Turin, Italy)

Many Catholics are familiar with the use of Sacred Scripture in meditation, known as *lectio divina*. Similarly, sacred art can be useful as a source of inspiration in meditation through a form of prayer called *visio divina*.

Visio divina means “divine seeing.” It is the prayerful contemplation of a work of sacred art, using art as a visual guide to meditation. If you are a visual learner, you might find *visio divina* particularly helpful in entering deeper into the mysteries of the Rosary as you pray.

Much sacred art focuses on the events of the Gospels and the mysteries of the Rosary, and so these pieces are incredibly fruitful to meditate on by means of *visio divina*. Prayerfully observing the sacred art of the mysteries of the Rosary can give us a starting point for our meditative and imaginative prayer, allowing us to enter into a deeper experience of Jesus’ love for us.

The sacred art enables us to step into the mystery, visualizing ourselves present with Jesus in the pivotal moments of his life and ministry. Perhaps we are listening to his preaching in the Proclamation of the Kingdom, are walking with Mary during her Visitation to Elizabeth, or are standing with the apostles on the mount, witnessing Jesus’ Transfiguration.

As we familiarize ourselves with these mental images of the mysteries, built from the contemplation of sacred art in *visio divina*, we can bring these mental images to our prayer of the Rosary. Our minds will be drawn to focus on the images we have meditated with, drawing us closer to an encounter with Jesus as we pray the words of the Our Father and Hail Mary.

Begin by selecting a work of sacred art. We recommend sacred art that features the mysteries of the Rosary, many of which will be featured in the *Rosary in a Year* guide. Many beautiful works of sacred art can also be found online for your meditation.

Take time to observe the sacred art. What is happening in this image? What stands out to you? Do any colors or shapes particularly appeal to you?

Ask God what he might want to say to you through this sacred art, and then take time in silence, gazing on the Lord and allowing him to gaze on you.



Visio divina can deepen imaginative prayer.
Observe the art in this bulletin and take a moment
to mentally step into the image.

To fully enter into this moment, use your imagination. If you stepped into the image, what would you see? What would you feel? Is it warm or cool? What can you hear? Is anyone speaking to you, or is it quiet at this moment?

Ask Jesus to sit with you in this moment and simply rest in his presence.



Scan the QR code to view *The Rosary in a Year* videos on the Ascension app. Download the prayer plan at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8s69vd>.

Use the lines below to write down insights or anything you would like to remember from your time of *visio divina* prayer.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

The Rosary in a Year is a daily podcast, produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mark-Mary Ames, CFR. It takes Catholics on a journey to form a lasting habit of prayer and gain tools to enter more deeply into meditation on the lives of Jesus and Mary through the Rosary. This bulletin was adapted from the podcast and materials that complement the podcast.

Encountering the Word

with Jeff Cavins

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21–23 • Colossians 3:1–5, 9–11 • Luke 12:13–21



Is Our Focus on Earth or Heaven?

In the readings for the Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, we are invited to consider where our hearts are truly focused—on earthly treasures or heavenly ones. The first reading from Ecclesiastes warns that the pursuit of earthly things is vanity, leading only to frustration. Similarly, Paul's letter to the Colossians reminds us that through Christ, we have been raised to new life. Our citizenship is in heaven, and we are called to set our hearts and minds on things above, not on earthly desires.

Paul urges us to think differently because Christ has transformed us! Our treasures should not be found in the things of this world, but in the things that matter to God. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve made the mistake of choosing earthly desires over their relationship with God. But in Christ, we are given the chance to choose differently—to walk with him and live for heavenly treasures.



The Gospel of Luke offers a parable about a rich man who amasses great wealth but misses the point of life. Jesus reminds us “to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions” (Luke 12:15). The man's wealth cannot follow him beyond the grave, and God calls him a fool for living only for himself.

This week's readings challenge us to reflect on what kind of treasure we are building. Are we investing in our relationship with God and in loving others, or are we focused on accumulating earthly wealth that will not last? Let us take this week to shift our focus toward heavenly treasures—those things that have eternal value. When we arrive in heaven, may we look back with joy, knowing that we invested in what truly mattered: faith, love, and the Kingdom of God.

Live the Gospel

Jeff Cavins says, “Jesus reminds us that the things we own now do not define us. Step back this week to look at the focus of your heart. Do you invest more in earthly pursuits or in building treasures in heaven? Consider ways you can shift your priorities toward eternal things—spend time in prayer, strengthen relationships, serve others. Begin small: Declutter your life and donate items you don't need, reminding yourself that true riches are found in faith and love.”

Dive Deeper

Scan this code to watch:



Or go to

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/eighteenth-sunday-in-ordinary-time-c/>

Ponder and Pray

» What can you do to follow Paul's advice and focus more on God's will and less on the distractions of the world?

» Like the rich man in Jesus' parable, do you acquire wealth or work toward accomplishments that may not align with God's kingdom? How might you redirect those efforts?

» How can the example of Adam and Eve's choice to pursue earthly desires help you recognize areas where you are called to trust in God's plan instead?

“

Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.

—Colossians 3:2

”

Make It Your Own

You and others in your household may use this space to write anything about today's Mass. It might be your view of Jeff Cavins' reflection, your priest's homily, your answers to the questions on this page—anything to help you and your household get the most out of today's Mass.

Jeff Cavins is the author of *The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation* and the creator of the video series *Sundays with Ascension*, from which this reflection was adapted.

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Sunday Q&A

Your Faith in Focus

REGAINING SPIRITUAL FOOTING

How do I cope with loss?

Fr. Mike Schmitz explores our options in the face of loss—whether an unrealized hope, a long-term illness, or even the death of a loved one. He suggests there are essentially four options that we should seriously explore and discern. Sometimes, we can restore what has been lost; other times, we can replace or even redesign; but still, other times, we are simply left to relinquish—to surrender to God.

Sometimes prayers are answered, dreams are realized, loved ones are healed, and God's merciful hand is evident because things are going so well. Other times—even though God continues to love and guide us—we are faced with loss, suffering, difficulty, and even death.

In times of loss, it is natural to question how to cope. Should you attempt to restore what was lost, seek to replace it, or perhaps redesign your life without it? Or is it better to let go and surrender your loss to God—who loves you—and trust?

Sometimes the only thing left is to relinquish, to

let go. Relinquishing does not mean you don't care. Relinquishing means that at some point, I can take this person, this relationship, this great gift that I had, and place it in the hands of the Father. I

can say, "This has broken my heart; this has broken my life, and now I place it into your hands, Father. I surrender. I surrender this person or relationship, I surrender this dream, I surrender this past way I used to be or this way I used to live. I relinquish this in order to move forward."

When we are faced with life's deep disappointments or even with full-blown heartbreak, we would do well to remember that when we surrender and trust, we are in good hands. A line from a psalm can help us get through bad spells and the worst of times. If you can commit it to memory, do so, or at least recall the point the psalmist makes:

"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit." —Psalm 34:18



Ponder and Pray

- Are there things in your life now that you need to process and surrender to God? What are they, and how have you been dealing with these realities up until now?
- Who in your life does this article make you think of? How can you be a support for them in coping with their difficulties?

Make It Your Own

Reflect on any of your losses using this chart. Whether you are confronted with simple disappointments or intense sufferings, see how Fr. Mike's four stages or options can apply to your situation. Note briefly how you coped, or are coping, in the spaces.

A loss I'm confronted with:	Restore	Replace	Redesign	Relinquish

Tip of the Week

Pray, talk it through with someone, and engage with any losses that you are dealing with in your life right now.

Dive Deeper

Scan the code or go to the URL to listen to Fr. Mike's full podcast episode on this topic:

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/podcast/coping-with-major-losses-4-practical-tips-from-fr-mike/>








WHAT MATTERS TO GOD



Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21–23 • Colossians 3:1–5, 9–11 • Luke 12:13–21

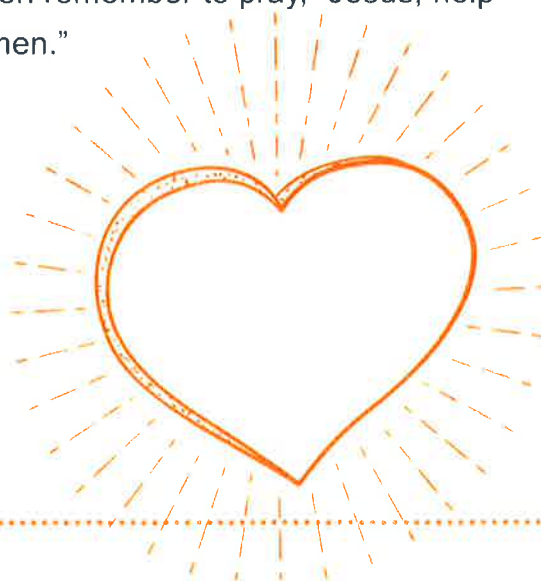
Family Car Talk

In today's Gospel, Jesus talks about the importance of eternal things rather than things of this world. He says those *"who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God"* are focusing on unimportant things. Talk with your family on the way home from Mass today about how you can focus on things that really matter.

-  **What do you spend most of your time doing (besides sleeping)? What do you spend the most time thinking about?**
-  **How many of those things are eternal things? How many are temporary?**
-  **How can you focus more on things that matter to God?**

 **DO YOU HEAR HIM?**

Instructions: Today's Psalm (Psalm 90) says, *"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."* One of these hearts is made of stone. The other shines with light. Brightly color the heart shining with light, and then remember to pray, "Jesus, help me always have a heart full of light and love. Amen."





WILL YOUR LIFE APPEAR?

Instructions: In today's second reading, St. Paul says, "*Your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.*" In this plain sketch of Jesus, someone is missing, maybe hiding. YOU! Come out of hiding and be with Jesus! Draw your face next to Jesus, or simply write your name neatly—or do both. Then, color Jesus' clothing in bright colors, and show "glory" with colors all around Jesus and you. Be creative! You may also write down things you like to do that, as St. Paul says, make "your life appear."



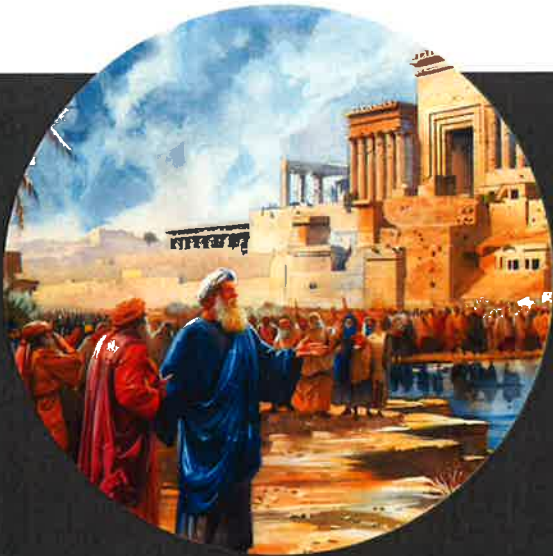
Week Thirty-One

Days 211-217



Exile Narrative: Isaiah 43–56 | Supplemental: Ezekiel 4–16; Proverbs 12:5–13:4

THE VALUE OF VISUALIZATIONS



Ezekiel Prophesies to Jews
in Babylon During Exile

Isaiah and Ezekiel are prophets who speak to God's people in their own times. However, their words, actions, and writings also carry meanings oriented toward a future fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This dual nature of prophecy enables us to see the complexity of God's work and understand that both levels of meaning are meant to teach and guide the Church.

- Isaiah again warns the people about their rejection of God and the consequences. His imagery is particularly powerful.
- Isaiah 45:9 says, "Woe to him who strives with his Maker, an earthen vessel with the potter! Does the clay say to him who fashions it, 'What are you making?'" Here, Isaiah proclaims the foolishness of treating God as if he were ours to command.
- In Isaiah 49:14–15, God says that even if a mother could forsake her child, God will remember his people. Then God says he has carved the names of his people on the palms of his hands—a way of saying he will never forget us or stop loving us.
- After his Resurrection, Jesus shows his apostles the wounds on his hands and feet. He allowed himself to be pierced for our sins; the marks show his love for us.
- Ezekiel says that God speaks in many different ways.
- In Ezekiel 4 and 5, the prophet acts out a vision that God gave him. He cuts off his hair and his beard and divides it into thirds. The first portion is burned up, representing fire, pestilence, or famine. The second is destroyed by the sword. The third is scattered to the winds.
- Ezekiel is enacting in visual form what is happening to God's people because they rebelled against him.
- Ezekiel 13 says there are many false prophets who tell the people what they want to hear, offering words of consolation when they needed to hear words of condemnation.
- Do we hear only what we want to hear? Do we only tell others what they want to hear? Do we hear and speak the words of God?

Dive Deeper

The Bible tells us we need the strength and guidance of others in order to form a good relationship with God. And others need us to help them become close to God. Today, pray intentionally for the people who help you spiritually to choose God in all situations.

Bible Answers

What is the explanation of the human and cow dung in Ezekiel 4?

In Ezekiel 4:12–13, the prophet tells the people of Israel they will bake their bread over unclean human dung. In Ezekiel's day, it was customary to bake bread over a fire fueled with animal dung. So why does God throw this curveball into the situation?

When Ezekiel speaks about the spiritual condition of Judah, he tells of an exile that will take the people from their own land to one filled with unclean food and strange customs. Here, the Lord is speaking to Judah symbolically to show them what the future holds. They will be humbled because they have sinned against God by worshiping foreign gods. The reference to human dung expresses just how bad Jerusalem has become.



POTTERY FROM THE TIME OF JESUS

Isaiah 45 uses the imagery of clay pottery to portray the humility that human beings should have before their Maker. St. Paul will do something similar in the New Testament. (See Romans 9.)



Scan the QR code to listen to the *Bible in a Year* podcast on the Ascension app, to get exclusive content, and to access transcripts for every episode. Download the reading plan at <https://media.ascensionpress.com/category/ascension-podcasts/bibleinayear/>

The Bible in a Year is a daily podcast, produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mike Schmitz, where we read the whole Bible following *The Great Adventure* Bible-study program created by Jeff Cavins. This bulletin was adapted from *The Bible in a Year Companion* books that complement the podcast.

Week 31

Paragraphs 1539–1589



THE CATECHISM IN A YEAR

WITH FR. MIKE SCHMITZ

How We Worship PART TWO: THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY

THE HOLY ORDERS OF OUR CHURCH

While there is a definite hierarchy in the Church, Holy Orders is a vocation of service for the salvation of others. Jesus wants all of us to be holy by coming into contact with him; he established the priesthood into the world to extend and continue his mission. Holy Orders is a trifold office of making holy, instructing, and governing in imitation of Christ's trifold office of Priest, Prophet, and King.

Keep in Mind

- Holy Orders consecrates bishops, priests, and deacons who pass on the “sacred power” of Jesus Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1538).
- To administer Holy Orders, the bishop lays hands on the man being ordained and offers a consecratory prayer for God to give the man the graces necessary for his calling.
- Everyone baptized shares in the priesthood of Jesus, but only those in the ministerial priesthood (bishops and priests) can act *in persona Christi*.
- The bishops sanctify, instruct, and govern through their leadership in their own dioceses.
- A bishop is responsible for every soul, Catholic and otherwise, in his diocese.
- Priests promise obedience to their bishops, but they are brother workers in serving the Church.
- The priest's most sacred role is consecrating the Eucharist.
- Deacons assist bishops and priests by serving at Mass, proclaiming the Gospel, celebrating marriages, presiding over funerals, and other works.
- The Church does not have the ability to ordain women because “the Lord Jesus chose men” exclusively when he instituted Holy Orders (CCC 1577).
- “Only a baptized man (*vir*) validly receives sacred ordination” (CCC 1577).



Jesus washes his disciples' feet
by Crazio de Ferrari (1606–1657)

Dive Deeper

Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet emphasizes that Holy Orders is a sacrament of sacrifice and service.

“Can Women Be Ordained Priests in the Catholic Church?” is an *Ascension Presents* video featuring Fr. Josh Johnson explaining why Holy Orders can be conferred only upon baptized men.



- Jesus countered his own culture by elevating women, making clear women and men are equal in dignity and equal heirs to grace.
- Like Baptism and Confirmation, Holy Orders places a permanent mark upon the soul of the recipient, so the sacrament cannot be given twice or removed.
- The graces conferred by the sacraments come from Jesus, so a priest's flaws cannot alter what Jesus bestows.
- Priests are holy only to the extent of how well they imitate Christ.

Use the space below to reflect on this week's content.

Take It to Prayer

God our Father, thank you for the gift of Holy Orders. Thank you for priests, bishops, and our Holy Father, the pope. Please preserve and protect priests. Give them zeal and love. Make up for what they lack so they can teach, sanctify, and govern your Church as you would. We pray this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.



The best place to listen along is the Ascension app. Scan the QR code to get exclusive bonus content and transcripts for every episode.

The Catechism in a Year is a daily podcast produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mike Schmitz. It helps us understand what it means to be Catholic by reading the entire *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and allowing those truths to shape our lives. This bulletin was adapted from the books that complement the podcast: *The Catechism in a Year Companions* by Petros Willey, Fr. Mike Schmitz, and Matthew Doeing.