

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, September 29, 2019

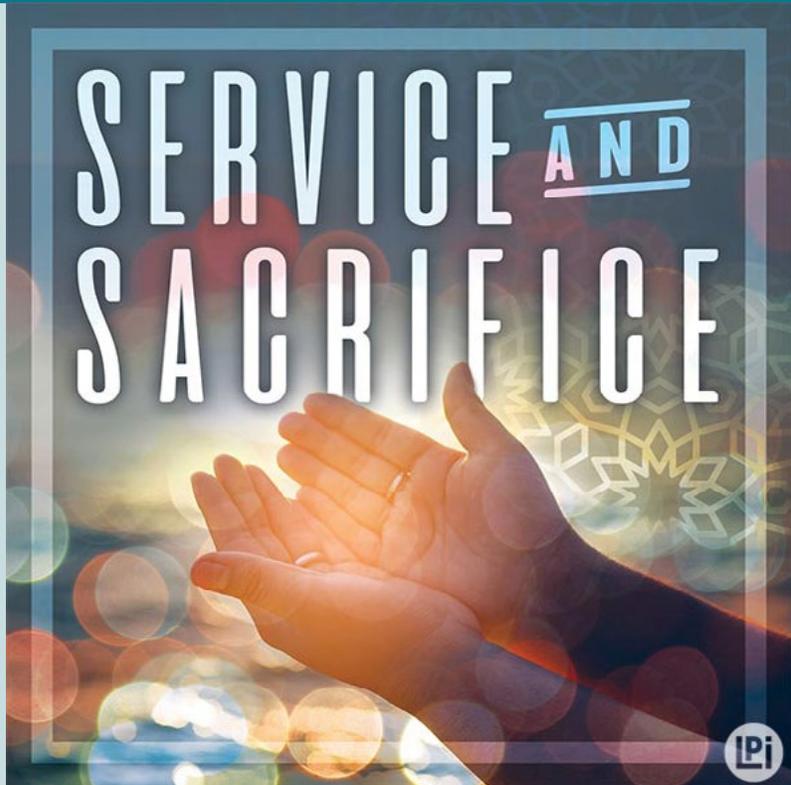
Compete Well For the Faith

Br. Silas Henderson, SDS

Amos 6:1A, 4-7

1 Timothy 6:11-16

Luke 16:19-31



The end of September and beginning of October are marked by a series of memorials and commemorations that vividly illustrate how universal the Church really is: Bohemian ruler, Wenceslaus, and Filipino husband and father, Lawrence Ruiz, and his martyred companions from Japan (both on September 28) ... great biblical scholar and Father of the Church, Jerome (September 30) ... the cloistered missionary-at-heart, Thérèse of Liseux (October 1) ... Indiana foundress, Theodora Guerin (October 3) ... beloved Francis of Assisi (October 4) ... Louisiana pastor and missionary, Francis Seelos (October 5) ... Carthusian founder, Bruno (October 6). These days remind us that holiness isn't limited to one way of life, gender, or historical period.

In this Sunday's second reading, we hear St. Paul urging his young disciple Timothy to "pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses" (6:11-12). We know that Paul was reminding his young coworker that his position within the Church demanded total dedication to God and a faithful witness to Christ.

Although few of us have the pastoral responsibility that Timothy did (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3), each of us does have a part to play in the mission of the Church. We see this vocation lived out in the lives of the saints we celebrate in these days. Because of this, we understand that Paul's words to Timothy are also addressed

to each one of us: we must seek those things that are of God and “compete well for the faith.”

This means that we are called to persevere in living out our individual, unique vocation of service to God and the Church. Paul, Timothy, and the saints mentioned above understood that this dedication demands something of us. This probably won't mean we will be martyred like Wenceslaus and Lawrence Ruiz or be called to a cloistered life like Thérèse or Bruno, but it does mean that we have to be willing to go out outside of ourselves and live lives of service and sacrifice.

This Sunday's Gospel — the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man — offers us an insight into what this sacrifice and service mean. Pope Benedict XVI reflected on this in his encyclical *Spes Salvi* (“Saved in Hope”): “Jesus admonishes us through the image of a soul destroyed by arrogance and opulence, who has created an impassable chasm between himself and the poor man; the chasm of being trapped within material pleasures, the chasm of forgetting the other, of incapacity to love, which then becomes a burning and unquenchable thirst” (no. 44).

The saints, who have oriented their lives toward the Other, realized the fullness of our capacity for love and were able to see brothers and sisters in the Lazaruses of the world. This call to be *with* and *for* others

isn't a mandate intended only for those who have been canonized or beatified. The Communion of Saints includes each of us: you and me together. Because, after all, “what is the Church if not the gathering of the saints?” (St. Nicetas of Remesiana).

Competing “well for the faith” — living our call to be disciples and to manifest the presence of Christ in the world — doesn't allow for selfish ambition, apathy, complacency, or indifference to the plight of others (cf. Amos 6:1a, 4-7). This isn't about political agendas, government budgets, or some radical ideology. In the end, this call is grounded in the Gospel, which forms the starting point and is the focus of our faith.

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PRAYER

O God,
you cover yourself with light as with a garment.
Shine in us,
putting to flight all the forces
of darkness and guilt,
of sin and selfishness.
Shine also through us
to any that live in shadow,
and so fill us with your radiant spirit
that we may be a lamp unto a neighbor's feet
and a light unto their path.
And when this day is done,
may every face we have met
be the brighter for our meeting,
and every heart braver,
with new joy and cheer and grace and strength.
Amen.