

**OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL**  
**SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL**  
**WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER**  
**Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**September 17, 2023**



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The original sin, of Adam, drove man out of Paradise, not primarily because he sinned, but because he failed to confess his sin before God when God questioned him. The sin of a moment now became the sin of a week – or rather, of a whole lifetime...

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**CHAPEL SCHEDULE**

*Weekday Mass:* (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)  
*Weekend Masses:* Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm  
*Holyday Mass Schedule:* afternoon prior at 4:00pm  
Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm  
*Confessions:* First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm  
*Department Telephone:* 508.363.6246  
*Chapel Website:* [www.ourladyofprovidence.net](http://www.ourladyofprovidence.net)

## **MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE**

Saturday, September 16 *Vigil of the 24th Sunday of the Liturgical Year*

4:00pm For a son's college success

Sunday, September 17 *Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

7:30am +John & Mary Murray by their family

4:00pm For the safety of travelers

Monday, September 18

12:00nn +Ann Davis Carey by the alumnae of former SVH School of Nursing

Tuesday, September 19 *Saint Januarius, bishop & martyr*<sup>2</sup>

12:00nn Asking God to improve the health of Joseph Walsh

Wednesday, September 20 *Ss. Andrew Kim Tae-gõn, priest and Chõng Ha-sang, companions*<sup>2</sup>

12:00nn For success in nursing exams

Thursday, September 21 *Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle*

12:00nn For the holy souls in purgatory

Friday, September 22

12:00nn For family healing

Saturday, September 23 *Vigil of the 25th Sunday of the Liturgical Year*

4:00pm +Sr. Mary O'Leary, SP and the deceased of the O'Leary family by her niece

Sunday, September 24 *Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

7:30am +Kathleen Loftus and the alumnae of former SVH School of Nursing

4:00pm +Felice and George Burns

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: *Sunday is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. Solemnities honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. Feasts must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. Memorials are of two types: Either the observance is an obligatory memorial<sup>1</sup> or an optional memorial<sup>2</sup>.*

### **Toward a Better Understanding of This Sunday's Gospel**

In last week's Gospel, the issue concerned how to act toward those who persist in sin and the graduated measures needed to respond to their obstinacy. Since notorious sinners exclude themselves from the community or excommunicated, then, the relevant matter is after they have made amends, how should they be readmitted. In today's Gospel, the issue is what the reaction should be when someone has sinned against you or me? Peter speaks for all offended parties when he asks Jesus, "...how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?" Forgiving an offender seven times already seemed excessive and, even worse, is the maximum number of seventy times seven times because that limit seems more unreasonable – much less going beyond it! In human terms, a barely limited demand to repeatedly forgive also appears to be enabling sinners to continue in their sin. Such reasoning is purely based upon earthly justice and an earthly solution to such disputed ideas. Elsewhere, Jesus said this to the man seeking His help in obtaining the rightful share of the family inheritance that he had coming from his brother, "Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator" (Lk 12:14)? Seen in that light, the Lord refutes Peter's declaration and says, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times." This illustrates the other-worldly aspect or the need to take the point of view of the Kingdom of heaven's perspective on forgiveness. To illustrate His point, Jesus recounts another parable. A king had a servant "who owed [the king] a huge amount" or ten thousand talents. The amount is enormous (10,000) and the talent (Gk. *τάλαντον*) was not a coin but rather a weight (*ca.* 75 lbs.). It is estimated that it would take twenty years to earn one talent; thus, 10,000 talents would require 200,000 years of labor. Since no one could possibly owe such a debt to anyone, not even a king, the parable is obviously speaking of God because we all owe Him the kind of debt which is impossible to ever repay! The heavily indebted servant obviously knew how desperate the situation was. Even the king had to realize that impoverishing this man and enslaving his whole family would never come even close to pay that enormous debt. The too easily-overlooked implication is that this servant had lost everything – his life and freedom along with endangering his own family with a similar fate. Yet, this cornered servant visibly displays the proper attitude of every disciple of the Lord Jesus when he "fell down, did [the king] homage" and begged him to be patient with him. According to scholars, in Saint Mathew's Gospel, prostrating oneself and asking the Father or Jesus to be merciful is the hallmark of authentic discipleship. The master was deeply moved by the debtor's plea for mercy. The Greek word translated as *moved with compassion* is the word *splagchnizomai* (Gk. *σπλαγχνίζομαι*). The

## Fr. Edward J. Farrell — *The Father is Very Fond of Me*

The most difficult reality we have to overcome is our own former personal judgments and prejudices. We would probably be much closer to people if we did not see them with our own eyes... if we did not listen to them with our own selective hearing, if we would believe more deeply what Christ has said to us of them. The Christian community is intended to be a model, to be a proof of this presence in us. Our greatest liability is that our communion of prayer does not become visible. It is not evident how we love one another, how we understand one another. There is no mid-ground between hatred and love, there is no mid-ground between enemy and friend. We have created a great no man's land between enemy and friend. But in the gospel, to have an enemy means that we are unconnected, that we are unrelated, that we do not acknowledge that this is my other self, that this is me. We are one body. There are no strangers, no enemies, there are no distances between us in Christ. We have to make this known and seen; it has to become visible. And that means that we have to take tremendous risks....

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first part of the word *splagchna* (Gk. σπλάγχνα) means internal organs, so *splagchnizomai* literally means to be moved so deeply by someone or something that you ached for them in the pit of your stomach. Far more than mere pity, this emotion is meant to move others so completely that they not only can physically feel it, but they are compelled to respond. It is a visceral, gut-wrenching, emotional response that is so strong that the experience goads the reaction to become physically moved to do something about it. *Splagchnizomai* suggests that when we see human need, we respond physically, emotionally, but decisively. This kind of compassion is not a timid, subtle, or distant response; this is not a quiet virtue. It is active, pronounced, and demanding. Deeply moved, the master not only released the servant from his threat to sell that man and his family into slavery, but he forgave the servant's astronomical debt, too. The parable could have ended at that point (Mt 18:27), but if it had ended there, we would have been left on our own to figure out the implications of God's infinite mercy "in forgiving our trespasses (Gk. παράπτωμα)." The sins, debts, trespasses, or transgressions that we have committed against God or neighbor constitute an enormous debt that the Lord generously forgives, despite its magnitude. The parable confronts us with how we treat others who owe us a ridiculously small debt when that is compared to the generosity of God in forgiving what we owe Him. The same servant who had an enormous debt forgiven then meets a fellow servant who owed him "a much smaller amount" or one hundred denarii. A denarius was the typical day's wage for a laborer, who worked six days a week with a Sabbath day of rest. Since religious pilgrimages annually required about two weeks to observe various Jewish holidays, the average laborer worked 50 weeks of the year and earned an annual wage of 300 denarii (50 weeks x 6 days). Therefore, 100 denarii was one-third of a year's salary, or four months' wages. Such a debt is manageable, unlike the punishing debt of 10,000 talents. The generously-forgiven servant goes into a rage and despite this minor debtor begging for time in the very words he had earlier used with the king, the now debt-free servant exacts the punishment that he had been spared, "...he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt." The contrast in behaviors is intended to arouse indignation — having been forgiven an enormous debt, you would expect the servant to be merciful to someone in a similar situation, though economically less suffocating. As hearers of the parable, we rightly share the master's anger and wholeheartedly agree with the withdrawal of forgiveness and the torment inflicted on him. This is not a lesson in justice or quid-pro-quo forgiveness; no, it reveals the nature of divine justice. No longer should the punishment simply fit the crime, forgiveness cannot be quantified, because God demands that "each...forgives your brother from your heart." God showers us with incommensurable forgiveness for the debt we have accrued to Him; thus, our conduct toward those who have offended us must mirror what God has done for us.

### National Eucharistic Revival - Phase Two: The Diocesan Year

In *Corpus Mysticum*, the late Jesuit theologian Father Henri de Lubac expressed the profound insight that "*the Eucharist makes the Church*" whereas during the second millennium, the era of Scholasticism, theological thought held more to the notion that "*the Church makes the Eucharist*." By understanding the nature of the Church in terms of communion de Lubac's insight sought return to the kind of thinking that marked the Fathers of the undivided Church of the first millennium. It also provided the key to an understanding of the Church (or ecclesiology), which overcomes the exaggerated individualism of modern times. Those two expressions tend to identify two rather different perceptions of the Church. If we say that the Eucharist makes the Church then we will readily understand that the Church is herself a family of Eucharistic communities, a communion of local churches, which was the patristic model. However, de Lubac showed that the community dimension of the Eucharist suffered greatly as a result of the Eucharistic controversies at the start of the second millennium. Due to those fractious debates, much more attention was subsequently paid to the reality that the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ than it was to the fact that the Church, then, receives these transformed heavenly gifts and that she herself is transformed in Christ by their reception. The particular perspectives that are derived from such a provocative insight highlight the links between the Eucharist and the Church community, the Holy Spirit and the future, respectively; all those insights are profoundly scriptural and traditional. In the Eucharist, Christ is feeding the Church and each of us as members of the Church. The Mass is also an occasion when the Holy Spirit is powerfully active, not only transforming the gifts of bread and wine but also transforming those who receive. Finally, the Eucharist is not just a memorial of a past event; it is also a foretaste of the future kingdom.



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# UNDERSTANDING THE REIGN OF GOD

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## Introduction: η βασιλεία των ουρανών

This Sunday marks the first in a series of five Sundays in which the Gospel is a parable about God's reign and that heavenly reign is often illustrated by the use of the image of a vineyard: The parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:21-35); the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16a); the parable of the two sons (Mt 21:28-32); the parable of the tenants (Mt 21:33-43); and the parable of the wedding feast (Mt 22:1-14 or 22:1-10). The expression the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven encompasses the spiritual realm over which God reigns as king or it can mean the fulfillment on earth of God's will. The phrase occurs frequently in the New Testament and is primarily used by Jesus in the three Synoptic Gospels (Mt, Mk, & Lk). It is generally considered to be the central theme of Jesus' teaching, but there are widely differing views in regard to the implications the expression has for Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God and its relation to the developed view of the Church. The full expression is seldom used Jewish or intertestamental literature and, yet, the idea of God as king was fundamental to Judaism. Thus, Jewish notions on that descriptive phrase underlie its meaning and, to some degree, those presuppositions determine its New Testament implications. Behind the word *basileia* (Gk. βασιλεία) or the Greek word for kingdom lies the Aramaic word *malkuth*. Given that Aramaic was the spoken language in time of Christ, it is quite likely that that was the word that Jesus used. *Malkuth* is primarily a reference not to a geographical area or to an explicit realm nor is it a reference to the people inhabiting the realm but, rather, the word refers to the activity of the king himself, his exercise of sovereign power. Thus, the idea of the kingdom of heaven or God's heavenly reign could be better translated into English by words such as kingship, rule, or sovereignty. The English word rule in Hebrew is *radah*, which is variously translated as rule, reign or to have dominion. One Hebrew scholar translated the word *radah* this way, "to actively partner with God in taking the world forward." To most Jewish people, in the time of Jesus, the world at large seemed so completely alienated from the God of Israel that the only way to address that widespread depravity was by divine intervention on a cosmic scale. While the specifics varied greatly, their common element was that God would send a supernatural or supernaturally endowed, intermediary either identified as the Messiah or the Son of Man. This divine entity would

incorporate the ability to judge who among the various peoples of the world was worthy to "inherit the Kingdom." The expression the Kingdom of Heaven, then, emphasized that such a Kingdom was understood as a divine gift and not some type of human achievement. According to the three Synoptic Gospels, the majority of Jesus' miraculous actions were to be framed in terms of prophetic symbols of the dawning of the Kingdom. Moreover, His teaching was primarily concerned with the right response to the crisis precipitated by the Kingdom's coming. Scholarly opinion is also divided as to whether Jesus taught that the Kingdom had definitively arrived during His lifetime or if it was a reality yet to come. It is likely that Jesus saw His life and its accompanying miracles as the supreme signs of the Kingdom's beginning, but that He envisioned its future fulfillment "with power." Jesus must have understood His own death as the providential condition for the Kingdom's full establishment. Nevertheless, He did appear to have expected its final consummation in a relatively short time (Mk 9:1). Thus, the earliest Christians were perplexed when the end of the world did not occur within the first apostolic generation, as Saint Paul, for example, expected. Christian experience soon suggested, however, that, as the result of Christ's Resurrection, many of the blessings traditionally reserved until the life of the age to come were already accessible to the believer in the present age. Although the phrase the Kingdom of God was used with decreasing frequency, that for which it stood was thought to be partially realized here and now in the life of the Church, which at various periods has been virtually identified with the Kingdom. Yet, the fullness of the Kingdom of God would only be completely realized after the end of the world or the Parousia and the accompanying Last Judgment. The Johannine writings in the New Testament played a large part in the transition to this traditional Christian understanding of the Kingdom of God. Over the centuries a variety of interpretations of what Jesus meant by the Kingdom or the Reign of God has been put forth. Theologians debate over whether the reign of God exists in the present or in the future. When the reign of God is understood as a vision that Jesus articulated for the people of His age, while not denying its future impact, you can begin to understand how it is both present and future, because that is how a vision operates. When people embrace a vision, they begin to live it out. The Reign of God is perfect, personal, and perpetual.

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