PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK Psalm 25:16, 18, 1-2, 5, 15, 20

Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me,*
for I am desolate and afflicted.
Look on my affliction and my pain,*
and forgive all my sins.
To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.*
O my God, I trust in You: Let me not be ashamed.
You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.
My eyes are ever toward the Lord,*
for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.
Keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You.

BLESS YOURSELF WITH THE HOLY CROSS AND SAY:
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

PRAY THE LORD’S PRAYER
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

SAY THE APOSTLES’ CREED
I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAY THE MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER
Morning: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Evening: I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.
**THEME OF THE WEEK:** The Repentance Wrought By the Spirit

The Church Year is endlessly new, even if it repeats every year. This year, for example, the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary takes over Sunday. But how wonderfully it fits with this week! In place of Christ’s twin parables where He comes to seek and to save the lost, rejoicing over every sinner who repents, we have Mary’s song of joy in “God her Savior,” the one who regards the lowly, raises the humiliated, and has mercy above all. It is the Lord’s pleasure to seek us out with His Word. Blessedness is to be found by that Word, found in that Word, so John leaps for joy at the visit of Christ; Elizabeth stands astonished at what great gifts faith receives from God; and the mother of our Lord sings the great New Testament Psalm: “He remembers the mercy He promised.”

**SUN**

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 1:39-56—The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

“Blessed is she who believed there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken from the Lord.” In light of Zechariah, the Visitation might seem like a knowing glance shared among women. But the merits of femininity and maternity aren’t what make Mary blessed: it’s the Word of God, treasured and trusted in a moment of grace. The Church still calls Mary “blessed” and even “mother of God” today. We do it not for her sake, but for her Son’s. The promise to Abraham concerning his Seed is now remembered. Blessed is faithful Mary; but holy is His Name. Remember Your mercy, Lord, and bless us. Amen.

**MON**

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 119:17-24—Eye-opening Counsel

The bountiful dealings of the Lord are sought in His Word. How often have we gained new insight there? We learn about ourselves and the depth of our fallen condition; we learn about God—how His wisdom and work surpass us. And as David prays, the Holy Spirit must open our eyes to this, or the Scriptures remain a closed book for us. The ways of this world are often in conflict with the commandments of God. Those who treasure His testimonies will be strangers here. But we have sure counsel in God’s commandments and promises. Lord, make Your testimonies my delight. Amen.

**TUE**

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 5:6-11—Firm in Faith, or in Convenience?

In Psalm 73 Asaph is about to give up because the good guys always lose. He wakes from his foolishness at the thought of “offending against the generation of God’s children.” Peter echoes this when he reminds us that our brothers bear these same sufferings all over the world. Can we be so self-centered as to think we have it so bad? Are we drunk on our own pride, saying, “how could this happen to me, of all people!”? Humble yourself under the cross God sends, that your exaltedness may come from His mercy and not your pride. Lord, take my anxiety and establish me firm in faith. Amen.

**WED**

**SCRIPTURE:** Micah 7:18-20—Uniquely Merciful

Mary magnifies the Lord because He is steadfast in His mercy. That is the primary characteristic of our God that distinguishes Him from all others: His steadfastness is not known in His self-absorption, His just punishment, or His manifest beauty in the world. He discloses Himself chiefly by showing mercy and pity, by forgiving sins, by having compassion. He wages war against our enemies—even if they are our own sinful hearts—and always to save and rescue. Who is like Him? The Father of our Lord Jesus stands alone. Lord, do not be angry with me forever. Pass over my sins for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**THU**

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 15:11-32—Pride Before Fall

To rest in the Lord’s steadfast mercy is better than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. There is no honor in being a prodigal. The Lord’s mercy is, to be sure, sufficient to redeem the world’s failures. But the greater and unresolved tragedy of this parable is the older son, who despised and resented the mercy of the father. Here he thought he was earning his place: the truth was that he was always with his father, and all that was his father’s belonged to the son also. Will this one also be found according to mercy? Lord, preserve us from pride and self-justification, and make Your mercy our treasure. Amen.

**FRI**

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 9:1-18—The Surprise of the Lord’s Mercy

What did Saul see when the scales finally fell from his eyes? He saw how confused he had been, that all of his zeal for the Lord had persecuted Him rather than promoted Him. Cut to the heart, what can he do? “Repent and be baptized,” as Peter preached. Here is where St. Paul’s great preaching of Justification touches the ground: what is the hope for sinners and enemies of God? It is in Jesus Christ, whom they crucify. He dies for them. He justifies the ungodly. Who is more surprised, Ananias or Paul? Thanks be to You, Lord, for You have redeemed me and given me Your Name. Amen.

**SAT**

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 25—Remember, but Only According to Your Goodness

Psalm 25 is a good remedy to the accusation that “the Church is full of hypocrites.” It is first and foremost a confession of our sins. But it is also a plea that the Lord would guide us, lead us, teach us, instruct us, correct us, and sanctify us. Those who wait for the Lord, endure suffering, and bear hatred are not to do so in their sins, but in integrity and uprightness. By no means can their uprightness or integrity overcome their guilt. The Lord must pardon our sin, because it is great. That is what Christ has come for. This is Israel’s redemption. Lord, instruct me in the way You choose, and deliver me. Amen.