



Judged or Invited?

FR. THOMAS M. SANTA, CSSR

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2) is the message preached by Jesus after the arrest of John the Baptist. It is important to place this message in context. Jesus is not repeating the preaching of the Baptist. His message is unique and compelling.

Look closely at what Jesus is saying. Do not automatically fill in the blanks with the memories of every sermon you have heard. Try to hear Jesus’ words again, for the first time. Is the emphasis on “repent,” or is the emphasis on the announcement, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand”? Does it make any difference?

Repeat these words and change the emphasis each time. Play with the words. Let the words play with you. Notice how you respond. Notice what makes a difference. Notice how you react, and, most of all, notice whether you feel invited or you feel judged.

The Baptist made no bones about it. You are being judged: “Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees” (Matthew 3:10). Jesus, on the other hand, seems not to judge but to invite: “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

In the invitation, we are challenged to see in a different way. Use different skills. Refrain from automatic judgments. Seek to understand but, most of all, to accept and to love. ●

Reflect

**What does “repent” mean to me?
A threat or an invitation?**



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**“Repent, for the kingdom
of heaven is at hand!”**

MATTHEW 3:2

Dear Padre,

Why can't a Protestant receive the Eucharist at a Catholic Mass?

United by baptism, fellow Christians are our brothers and sisters in the Lord. As such, they are always welcome at Catholic Mass, but they do not ordinarily participate in holy Communion. “Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to holy Communion” (Code of Canon Law, 844 §4).

When Catholics receive Holy Communion, they firmly believe the bread and wine are transformed into the Real Presence of Christ. In the Eucharist, we become part of the body of Christ and share in holiness and unity with one another. Our “Amen” to “The Body of Christ” and “The Blood of Christ” means, “Truly, so be it!” It indicates that we affirm our belief in this mystery, which is fundamental to our Catholic identity. If non-Catholics receive the Eucharist but do not embrace this identity and same belief, it may disrespect Catholics who do, as well as disrespect their own identity in the denomination to which they belong.

However, at Mass, fellow Christians can join their prayers with Catholics in praising God. Together, we also pray that the divisions which separate us will finally disappear, in keeping with Christ’s prayer for us “that they may all be one” (John 17:21). ●



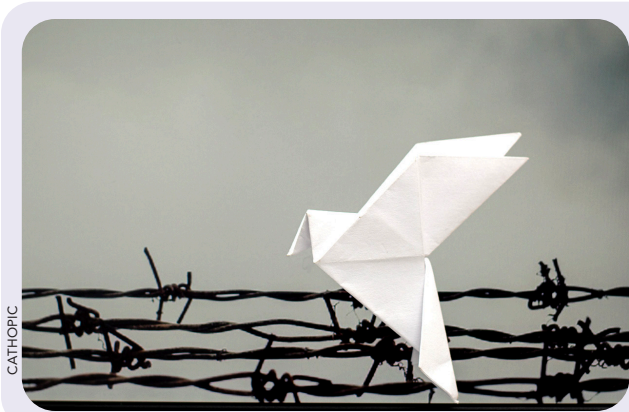
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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
January 26	January 27	January 28	January 29	January 30	January 31	February 1
Sts. Timothy and Titus, Bishops	Weekday	St. Thomas Aquinas, Priest and Doctor of the Church	Weekday	Weekday	St. John Bosco, Priest	Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
2 Tm 1:1–8 or Ti 1:1–5	2 Sm 6:12b–15, 17–19	2 Sm 7:4–17	2 Sm 7:18–19, 24–29	2 Sm 11:1–4a, 5–10a, 13–17	2 Sm 12:1–7a, 10–17	Zep 2:3; 3:12–13
Mk 3:22–30	Mk 3:31–35	Mk 4:1–20	Mk 4:21–25	Mk 4:26–34	Mk 4:35–41	1 Cor 1:26–31
						Mt 5:1–12a

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A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

Dear brothers and sisters, all too much violence exists in the world and our societies. Amid wars, terrorism, human trafficking, and widespread aggression, our children and young people need to be able to experience the culture of life, dialogue, and mutual respect. Above all, they need the witness of...those who have suffered injustice and violence [and] resist the temptation to seek revenge.

ADDRESS TO THE “ARENA OF PEACE,” ROME, MAY 30, 2025