

SUNDAY MASS

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:

God is in his holy place, God who unites those who dwell in his house; he himself gives might and strength to his people.

FIRST READING: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 119.

RESPONSE:

O Lord, how I love your law.

1. I have said, 'O Lord, my portion is to obey your words'.
The law from your mouth means more to me than large quantities of silver and gold. **R**
2. Let your merciful love console me by your promise to your servant.
Show me compassion, that I may live, for your law is my delight. **R**
3. That is why I love your commands more than finest gold,
why I rule my life by your precepts, and hate false ways. **R**
4. Your decrees are wonderful indeed; therefore my soul obeys them.
The unfolding of your word gives light, and understanding to the simple. **R**

SECOND READING: Romans 8:28-30.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, alleluia! Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom. Alleluia.

GOSPEL: Matthew 13:44-52.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all his benefits.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Live the Word

Mon 27 Jul Liturgy of the Day

Jeremiah 13:1-11; Deut 32:18-21; Matthew 13:31-35

Today let every encounter with another person – whoever they might be – give us a chance to recognise the Risen Lord. Lord, let me seek and find you in others today.

Tue 28 Jul (St Victor I, PM)

Jeremiah 14:17-22; Psalm 79; Matthew 13:36-43

Prayer is not merely a matter of petitioning or thanking God. Rather, it is an intimate sharing of the soul. Spend quiet time in open listening, allowing God to speak to you in the depth of your being.

Wed 29 Jul Ss Martha, Mary & Lazarus

1 John 4:7-16; Psalm 34; John 11:19-27

Martha teaches us that work can become unhealthy when it distracts from Jesus. How can I balance my active service with prayer and listening in my life? Do I serve to gain approval, or out of love for Christ?

Thu 30 Jul (St Peter Chrysologus, BD)

Jeremiah 18:1-6; Psalm 146; Matthew 13:47-53

"Fasting is the soul of prayer, almsgiving is the life-blood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated." – St Peter Chrysologus, on the integrated nature of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Fri 31 Jul St Ignatius of Loyola, Pr

Jeremiah 26:1-9; Psalm 69; Matthew 13:54-58

On the subject of faith, St Ignatius taught: "For those who believe, no proof is necessary. For those who disbelieve, no amount of proof is sufficient". Food for thought.

Sat 1 Aug St Alphonsus Liguori, BD

Jeremiah 26:11-16.24; Psalm 69; Matthew 14:1-12

"Speak to God often of your business, your plans, your troubles, your fears – of everything that concerns you. Converse with God confidently and frankly..." – St Alphonsus Liguori.

Sun 2 Aug 18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Isaiah 55:1-3; Psalm 145; Matthew 14:13-21

"Believing in the resurrection can and should transform not only how we view the world, but how we live in it. We should become people in whom others can see new life." – Paula Gooder

KEY: SOLEMNITY; FEAST; Memorial; (Optional Memorial)
P=Pope; M=Martyr; B=Bishop; D=Doctor; Pr=Priest

Catholic Link

SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT AND WATCHFUL FAITH

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A
Divine Office: Week I • 26 July 2026

St Thomas Aquinas OP

Today we live in a society of different religions rubbing shoulders daily, mostly with tolerance. How did the Church respond to the spread of Islam into Europe in the 7th and 8th centuries?

In 711 AD, Muslim armies entered the Iberian Peninsula, establishing Al-Andalus, a centre of Islamic governance, culture, and scholarship. Islamic expansion into France was halted at the Battle of Tours. But over time, Muslim influence extended across the Mediterranean and later through the Ottoman Empire into southeastern Europe.

This led to both conflict and exchange. In regions such as Andalusia, Muslims, Christians, and Jews coexisted, with frequent intellectual dialogue. *Catholic Link* has already shown how Greek philosophy, thanks to Muslim scholars, entered Western Europe and laid the foundation for Christian scholastic philosophy, within which Thomas Aquinas emerged as a central figure.

Aquinas lived at a time when Islam was a religious rival on one hand and an intellectual discussion partner on the other. His work, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, was written as a rational defence of Christianity aimed at non-Christians. Of course, New Testament scriptural arguments would not succeed, so Aquinas relied on reason and philosophy, particularly Aristotelian thought, to articulate his arguments.

In his dialogue with Islamic philosophy, Aquinas responded especially to Muslim interpretations of Aristotle. For example, Aquinas defended the individuality and immortality of the human soul. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, he addressed questions about God's existence, creation, and the purpose of human life. Aquinas tried to seek common ground, despite religious rivalry. But he also argued for Christian doctrines like the Trinity and the Incarnation despite not being able to prove

them purely by reason.

So, the Christian response to the spread of Islam was both opposition and engagement. Aquinas treated Islam as a competing theo-

logical system to be taken seriously, yet believed it could be refuted intellectually. His work models how the truth of Christianity can be asserted within a context of religious diversity and debate.

That said, the modern Catholic response to Islam has evolved significantly, particularly in the time of Pope Francis. In his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis emphasizes dialogue, fraternity, and mutual respect among religions rather than apologetic confrontation. While not abandoning core Christian beliefs, he reflects a shift in tone and method compared to Aquinas.

Fratelli Tutti was partly inspired by Francis' encounter with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Cairo, Ahmad al-Tayyeb, and builds on the 2019 document they signed together on "Human Fraternity". In it, they call for a culture of encounter in which people of different faiths, including Muslims and Christians, recognize one another as brothers and sisters. Rather than seeking doctrinal superiority over each other, Pope Francis and the Imam stressed shared values such as peace, justice, and the dignity of every human person.

Pope Francis acknowledges the historical tensions between Christianity and Islam but encourages moving beyond them. He highlights the necessity of religious freedom and rejects violence carried out in the name of religion. Thus, he reframes the engagement between Christianity and Islam from one of intellectual "sparring", as we saw in Aquinas' time, to one of collaborative coexistence in a globalized world. In our era, *Fratelli Tutti* represents a significant development in the Catholic Church's approach, emphasizing dialogue over debate.



Panel of a 15th-century altarpiece by Carlo Crivelli

The Prayer Book of Jesus



The Prayer Book of Jesus, the Psalms, has remained throughout Jewish and Christian history as a deep well of inspiration for individuals and communities at prayer. In the Book of Psalms we are taught how to use the Word of God as our prayer and how to turn to God in any situation. The text is presented in a way that invites us to actually ponder and pray the psalms we are reading about. A must have for anyone who prays the Office daily.

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