

Devotions for the week of the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 9-13, 2026

Monday of the Week of Epiphany 5 – Prayer of the Week

O Lord, keep Your family the Church continually in the true faith that, relying on the hope of Your heavenly grace, we may ever be defended by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

There are now internet services which will aggregate your genealogical research with other people's genealogical research to create a massive family tree. I heard one fellow recently who found out he was related to Albert Einstein and several A-list actors. Of course, there is a downside, he discovered his wife was the 12th cousin of a mass murderer.

When Christ our Lord took up humanity, he entered the whole family tree. I don't know if the websites can trace you back to the first century and the family of Mary, Joseph, and the line of David or not, but you don't need it to. Jesus is already in the family by baptism, and he is not some brother-in-law of a sixteenth cousin six times removed. He is brother.

We pray that God would keep His family the Church in the true faith. It is one of the truisms of life that you sometimes have that member of the family who makes your eyes roll. I think Jesus must sometimes shake His head at what I have done. But He still claims me. I am His. He is answering this prayer with preachers, teachers, friends, a loving spouse, and maybe even a devotion writer now and again. How has He worked to keep you in the true faith today? Think about that and thank Him. It is what the members of this family do when a member of the family does something good for us.

Tuesday of Epiphany 5 – Isaiah 58:1-11

“Cry aloud; do not hold back;
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

² Yet they seek me daily
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that did righteousness
and did not forsake the judgment of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they delight to draw near to God.

³ ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’
Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.

⁴Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.

Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?

Is it to bow down his head like a reed,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?
Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶“Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

⁸Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’

If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

¹⁰if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.

¹¹And the LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.

It happened again today. Just look at the news. Another person was found to be a hypocrite. Was it a socially conservative politician being arrested for soliciting a prostitute or was it a liberal activist whose multi-million dollar mansion belies their identification with the poor and

oppressed? Was it another version of the Los Angeles politicians who played the race card repeatedly but then were secretly taped uttering slurs about another racial minority? Or worse, was it a religious figure who was outed for some sexual or financial sin? Our world loves to expose a good hypocrite. I must admit it, I like seeing their hypocrisy exposed no matter their ideological or personal bent.

Through His prophet Isaiah, our Lord has His hypocrisy meter on high sensitivity. The people pretend they love God and seek Him out, but the Lord points to the realities of their lives and reads another story there. They bend their bodies and bow their heads like a reed as they say their prayers, but God is interested in the liberation of the bound, the undoing of injustice, the breaking bread with the hungry, and the clothing of the naked. I once had someone tell me they were looking for a church that wasn't full of hypocrites. I recommended that when she found it that she not join it. She would ruin it.

I must be careful with my delight in the unmasking of the hypocrisy of my neighbor and not only because I most likely share in their vices in some way and have my own hypocrisy, but because such delight turns quickly to cynicism and despair of any good. God calls Isaiah's people and us to lives which live in mercy, kindness, generosity, and care for our fellow human being. He does so because he has put just such a love in our hearts. It is possible because God has shone His Light, Jesus, in our hearts. Our gloom, our worst days, shines with His forgiveness. He has died and risen again for us because we are hypocritical sinners and need just such a Savior. Now, we can put away the pointing of the finger and speaking of wickedness. God gave us His mercy and grace for just such a reason, that we be the light which this world desperately needs. This takes faith. Trust in Jesus. He will help you.

Wednesday of Epiphany 5 – Psalm 112:1-9

¹ Praise the LORD!

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
 who greatly delights in his commandments!

² His offspring will be mighty in the land;
 the generation of the upright will be blessed.

³ Wealth and riches are in his house,
 and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴ Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;
 he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

⁵ It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;
 who conducts his affairs with justice.

⁶ For the righteous will never be moved;
 he will be remembered forever.

⁷ He is not afraid of bad news;
 his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.

⁸ His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,
 until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

⁹ He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn is exalted in honor.

About a year ago, my family and I gathered to lay our beloved uncle Ray to rest beside his wife, Eleanor. Uncle Ray was amazing. Spry and still able to talk and recollect his long life well into his 90's. This gave us a window into times which he alone remembered. A few years ago I had the chance to speak with him at length. He remembered being a little boy, I think he must have been about 5 or 6 years old, when his father walked into the house and announced that the local bank had closed. It was the Great Depression and they lived in South Dakota. My grandfather had been doing well. He had savings in that bank. My uncle even described a loan which my grandfather had made to someone through that bank. In one afternoon, my grandfather went from a solid middle class sort of guy to someone on the edge of insolvency.

He eventually lost the farm due to a small loan he had taken out. He and his family would travel around the country for some time before settling in Wisconsin. He had had to start over and rebuild his farm and career.

The psalmist tells us that the man who trusts in God is not afraid of bad news and his heart is firm (vs. 7). On either side of this verse, he speaks of the man who uses his wealth to help others. He deals generously and lends. A couple of verses later he says that he distributed freely, he has given to the poor. I am sure that there were a few moments of anxiety when my grandparents wondered what to do, but they never lost faith in God. This illustrates a little of how God took care of that man his family. Before the Great Depression struck, when my grandfather had resources, he had helped several other folks escape the terrible economy in Germany in the 1920's. Now, when my grandfather needed help, it was these families who helped him and his family.

It is well with the man who deals generously and lends (vs. 5). The psalmist speaks truth.

Thursday of Epiphany 5 – I Corinthians 2:1-12

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom.² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.⁹ But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

He could be an odd man; I suppose you might call him rather eccentric. He was my teacher when I was a freshman in high school. All freshmen in high school think their teachers are odd. It just goes with being 14. But in this case, it wasn't just the 14-year-olds who thought this. While I was at the seminary, he also entered the pastoral ministry and served a congregation not far from where I served my first parish. I came of course to know him differently and came to call him a friend. He had not become less eccentric as the years had passed. He was very fastidious about certain things. We once drove together to a distant pastoral gathering and I noticed that he manually initiated the turn signal for each blink of the blinker in his car. I asked if his turn signal was broken, “No, no,” He replied, “it just flashes a little too rapidly for my preference, so I do it this way.”

Several years later he retired and returned to that community where I went to high school and not far from where my parents lived. One terrible night my father died, and my family all came back to that large church for his funeral. After the service there was my old teacher and colleague. He had known my parents well and had taught most of my siblings. He was still a little eccentric. He was serving in his retirement as an assistant to the pastor of that parish. He walked through the room, greeting people, stopping at each table, and talking,

I will never forget the words of resurrection and peace he spoke to me that day, when we were saddened by the death of our father. He did not come with lofty speech or sophisticated wisdom which the world would prize. He came with the secret and hidden wisdom of God which this broken heart needed. I praise God for sending me my friend, my teacher, and colleague.

Friday of Epiphany 5 – Matthew 5:13-20

¹³“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore

whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

When I was a child and we still sometimes read the King James Version, Jesus was heard to say in verse 18 that “not a jot or a tittle shall pass from the Law...” I remember giggling at that phrase. A “jot” is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It looks a little like an apostrophe and sits, like an apostrophe, above the line of text. A tittle is a small pen stroke which helps readers of Hebrew differentiate some letters that look similar to each other, it is like a little tail or even a serif. Many typefaces make use of similar little tails on letters. If you have ever used Times New Roman in a document, it has serifs.

Jesus tells us that not even the smallest letter or the stroke of a pen shall pass from the Law until it is accomplished. That includes all the promises that God made to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It includes God’s promise to redeem His people and rescue them. Of course, it includes a great number of rules and laws and ordinances as well. They too will have their completion, but we know that they have been completed in Christ.

Jesus tells us that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the greatest church-goers of all time, it is insufficient. Praise God, Jesus has fulfilled the Law and, in His cross, he has given that obedience and righteousness to us. Now we can let our light shine, and we can be the salt of the earth, making it better and preserving what we can preserve of God’s goodness. For Jesus has fulfilled the Law.