

**PASTORAL LETTER:
THE SECOND SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME
~ January 18, 2026 ~**

My dear Little Flower,

As we continue our journey through Ordinary Time, the Scriptures invite us to reflect deeply on who we are as disciples of Jesus and how we are called to live out the radical love of the Gospel in a world that so often feels fractured by division, fear, and sorrow.

These Sunday-readings remind us that God's justice is inseparable from His mercy, and that our vocation as Christians is to reflect that same heart in our relationships, our communities, and our society.

In recent days, our nation has again been shaken by violence and loss. A woman in Minneapolis was shot and killed by a federal immigration officer, a tragic event that has sparked protests, vigils, and walkouts both locally and across the country. Thousands have gathered to voice grief and to call for accountability and change — a powerful witness to the deep desire for justice and dignity for all people.

In the midst of this pain, it is easy for hearts to grow hardened, for anger to turn toward hatred, or for fear to eclipse compassion. Yet the Gospel calls us to a different way. We are to pray not only for those who have suffered and those crying out for justice, but also for those who are charged with the difficult and dangerous work of keeping others safe. Law enforcement officers carry a heavy responsibility, and many do so with courage and a desire to serve the common good. At the same time, we cannot ignore the deep wounds and legitimate frustrations of those who feel unheard, unseen, or harmed by the

systems of power. While laws exist and must be navigated responsibly, the Church insists that our brothers and sisters - immigrants, even those without legal status, are deserving of humane treatment; no circumstance, including immigration status, ever removes a person's God-given dignity.

A parent would never want to see their children at war with one another, fighting or breaking apart. The **heavenly Father's heart is the same**. He shows no partiality among His children. He loves each one of us for the unique person we are, created in His image, and calls us into a family marked by mercy, not by bitterness. In love, He seeks the healing of every wound, the truth that leads to reconciliation, and the peace that comes from humility and justice.

In responding to these tragedies, we must be people of **both/and**: *both* advocating for justice and standing against violence, *and* praying for mercy and conversion of heart on every side. In the face of outrage and grief, we are called not to withdraw into despair, but to lean more deeply into Christ, the one who heals wounds and casts out fear.

As we gather around the Eucharist, we remember that Christ himself took upon His shoulders the brokenness of the world. In the sacrament of His Body and Blood, He invites us into His own heart of compassionate love. From this sacramental life flows our mission in the world: to be agents of peace in the midst of turmoil, witnesses of truth without hatred, and instruments of unity in communities that thirst for reconciliation. May the God of all consolation fill our hearts with His grace, that we might be His instruments of healing and hope in a world in need of both.

Your parish priest,
Fr JC Merino
Pastor, Church of the Little Flower
January 12, 2026