

This Third Sunday of Advent is called, *Gaudete* Sunday. *Gaudete* means to be glad or to rejoice. Today's liturgy is marked with an ambiance of joy—the joy that only God can give, the joy that the world cannot take away. The First Reading (Is 35:1-6a,10) speaks of the coming of the Messiah, the Christ, when “those whom the Lord has ransomed will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy; they will meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning will flee.” In the Gospel (Mt 11:2-11), Jesus declares, “Blessed (happy) is the one who takes no offense at me.” The Second Reading (James 5:7-10) addresses one of the greatest enemies and killers of divine joy – impatience:

*“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. **You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not complain, brothers, about one another, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates. Take as an example of hardship and patience, brothers, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.** Indeed, we call blessed those who have persevered. **You have heard of the perseverance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, because “the Lord is compassionate and merciful.”**”* (James 5:7–11)

Impatience drives away joy because it squelches the ultimate source of joy: love. We are made for love. Perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn 4:18). Pure, sacrificial, love fulfills us, gives our lives meaning and reason for joy. What is love? Love has many characteristics, properties, yet it remains a reality that can only be fully explained and defined in reference to Almighty God: God is Love. When St. Paul launches into his litany of the properties of love, notice the very first thing on the list: “Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude . . .” (1 Cor 13:4ff). Patience is about love; when we fail in being patient we are failing in love.

Patience or lack thereof, touches every aspect of life. We can speak of patience in the performance of daily duties, patience in adversity (ill-health, inconveniences, the tragedies of life, annoying people, etc...), and patience with one's self. I would like to address one area of our lives where patience is most needed: prayer. Only in God do we find perfect love and perfect patience; only by conversing with Him, seeking His face, can we share in His divine love and divine patience! When we pray we must give our time to God and not be anxious to be “finished”—the more patient and peaceful our prayer, the more patient and peaceful our life!

I'm out of space! I leave you with some wise and inspiring food for meditation:

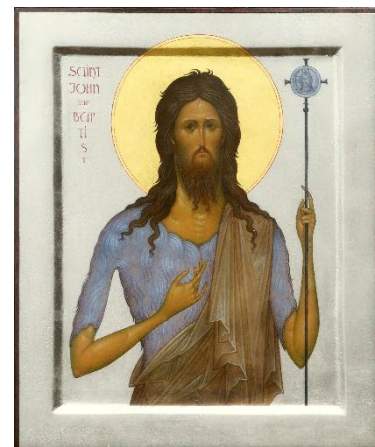
“True patience for the love of God is therefore the highest test and most evident proof of the presence of a noble degree of charity, because it can be obtained, even with the help of grace, **only by dint of labor, self-combat, and effort**; but we have the sensible result in the **possession of oneself** and in **peace of soul**.” St. Francis de Sales.

“The life of man is nothing but a continual warfare and temptation; and because it is a warfare, you must watch over your heart with sedulous care that it may be ever at peace. If any movements signal sensual disturbances, take heed to calm the storms within your heart instantly, never permitting the pursuit of vain and illusory pleasures. Exercise this caution not only in time of prayer, but any time disquieting thoughts assail you, for **prayers will be indifferently said until the soul knows peace**. Observe, however, that all this must be done with a certain mildness and effortless ease, as the principal effort of our lives should be the quieting of our hearts, and the prudent guidance of those hearts lest thy go astray.” *The Spiritual Combat and A Treatise on Peace of Soul*, by Dom Lorenzo Scupoli, p. 205.

“If at times you are in such confusion of mind that you seem totally incapable of calming yourself, have immediate recourse to prayer. And persevere in it in imitation of Christ, Our Lord, Who prayed three times in the garden to show mankind that only in conversation with God can afflicted souls find haven and refuge. Let us pray without ceasing that repose may replace the chaos in our hearts, and that a humble submissiveness to God's will may bring our soul to its former tranquility.” Ibid., Scupoli, p. 207.

Amongst all the hustle and bustle remember, be patient, and have a peaceful week!

Your Servant in Christ,  
Fr. Terry Staples



I am sending my messenger before you.  
“Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”



## Blessed Mary Frances Schervier

**Feast Day: December 15**

**Born: January 3, 1819**

**Died: December 14, 1876**

**Venerated in 1969**

**Beatified: April 28, 1974 by Pope Paul VI**

Mary Frances Schervier was born in Aachen, Germany into a prominent and prosperous family. Her father was a successful factory owner. This setting exposed her from an early age both to comfort and to the growing misery of workers and the urban poor during the Industrial Revolution, a contrast that deeply impressed her. Her mother died when Frances was only thirteen and within about a year, two of her older sisters also died leaving her the primary homemaker for her father and younger siblings. These early encounters with suffering and death both within her own family and among the poor shaped in her a strong compassion; moving her to see Christ in those who were sick, bereaved, or neglected.

Drawn to a life completely dedicated to God, Frances initially considered entering a strictly contemplative community such as the Trappistines; however, her sense of call increasingly pointed toward a form of religious life rooted in service among the poor. She entered the Third Order (Secular Franciscan Order). Her father died when she was 26 breaking her last major family tie and opening the practical possibility of founding something new. Encouraged by a friend and spiritual advisor, she discerned that God was asking her not simply to join an existing convent but to gather companions to live a community life of prayer and direct service to the poorest of the poor. Frances and four like-minded women left their homes and began to live together in a simple house dedicating themselves to a rhythm of common prayer, household work, and ministry to the sick and poor. Frances was chosen as superior of this small community, which gradually took shape as the Poor Sisters of St. Francis. They practiced rigorous personal poverty, wore simple clothing, and chose to live in poor neighborhoods to be close to those they served. This radical position on poverty initially drew criticism and hesitation from some church and civil authorities, yet it also gave powerful credibility to their mission since they shared the insecurity and hardships of the people they helped.

Within a few years of their formal approval, the Poor Sisters of St. Francis extended their mission beyond Europe. Frances sent sisters to the United States to serve impoverished German immigrants in places like New York, New Jersey, Ohio, and Kentucky where they opened hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the aged. Francis personally joined her sisters in nursing wounded soldiers during the Franco-Prussian War and the American Civil War. Her presence in wartime hospitals, tending to the suffering and dying regardless of side, displayed a charity that transcended national and political divisions and testified to the universality of Christian compassion. By the time of her death the congregation founded by Mary Frances Schervier had grown to around 2,500 members.

**Reflection:** Frances lived a life of radical poverty, merciful love for the socially despised, and perseverance in humble service. She chose to renounce the security of her wealthy upbringing, insisting that she and her sisters live as truly poor women so their service to the poor would flow from shared experience rather than distant benevolence. Her courage was reflected in her readiness to nurse those with feared illnesses and to work near battle lines during wars. She also showed spiritual fortitude in facing misunderstandings and opposition, steadfastly holding to the demanding Franciscan ideal of poverty and charity while remaining obedient to ecclesial authority. Her sisters continue to operate hospitals, nursing homes, and houses of care for the aged and poor; a living continuation of her vision that every suffering person should encounter the tenderness of Christ through practical love.