

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

The Journey Home

1962 Roman Missal — Homily

11 October 2026

A father is on the road home. When he left his house, his son was dying. He went to find Jesus because his child needed help that he could not give. Now he is returning, but Jesus is not walking beside him. The father has a word to carry home.

That is the moment to stay with in today's Gospel. Before the servants arrive, before the father learns when the fever broke, he begins the journey. What has changed? He has not seen his child. He has heard Jesus, and the word he has heard is enough to set him moving.

At first, the father asks Jesus to come down and heal his son. There is urgency in the request. The child is at the point of death. When Jesus challenges a faith dependent on signs and wonders, the father asks again: "Lord, come down before that my son die." He wants Jesus in the room. He wants the healer where the sickness is.

Saint Gregory the Great notices something here. The father must believe that Jesus can help, or he would not have come. Yet he still thinks that Christ's power needs Christ's bodily presence beside the child. His trust is real, but his understanding of the one he trusts is too small. The Lord who made the world does not lose his power across the distance between two towns.

Jesus answers: "Go thy way. Thy son liveth." The father came asking Jesus to make a journey. Jesus gives the father a journey to make. And John tells us that the man believed the word and went his way. Christ heals the son, and he teaches the father to trust him. The gift and the lesson arrive together.

Then the servants meet him. They bring good news. The father asks when the child began to recover, and the hour they name is the hour when Jesus spoke. John wants us to hear that correspondence. The healing really happened; the testimony matters. Faith does not make the father's question unnecessary. But his departure came before the

answer. He had already begun to act on Christ's word.

We can postpone obedience until we feel we possess the whole outcome. Think of an admission of fault that we know we owe someone. We may wait until we can be certain the conversation will end well. The other person must first become receptive; our own embarrassment must first disappear. Meanwhile the needed words go unspoken. Our desire to control the answer has begun to govern whether we will tell the truth.

Today's Epistle brings this movement into our daily lives. It tells us to walk wisely, to understand God's will, and to redeem the time because the days are evil. Wisdom is needed precisely when the circumstances are difficult. We do not have to wait for a trouble-free world before we can be faithful within it.

Saint John Chrysostom explains that such wisdom may cost us an advantage. We may have to give up the satisfaction of answering hostility with hostility. Keeping faith can matter more than winning the encounter. An honest admission may leave us with less to defend and more to repair. Yet we can begin that work because truthfulness belongs to the Lord's will, even while another person's response remains beyond our control.

The Epistle moves through song and thanksgiving and ends with being subject to one another in the fear of Christ. It reaches the way we treat people. The heart that sings to God is learning to serve the neighbor. Belief in Christ's word has something to do with what we say at home and whose burden we help to carry.

But there is a hard question beside the road home. What about the father or mother who prays and does not receive this good news? What about the sick person who remains sick? This father received an explicit assurance from Jesus that his son lived. We have not been given that same assurance about

every illness. This particular cure is not a promise that sufficient faith will secure whatever bodily recovery we ask for.

The Mass itself keeps us from making that mistake. At the Offertory it gives us the captives beside the rivers of Babylon, remembering Zion and weeping. Their tears belong in the worship of God. At Communion it gives us the servant who finds comfort in God's promise while still in humiliation. The suffering has not first disappeared. Hope can remain in a life that still hurts.

Saint Augustine explains that when this servant asks God to remember his word, he is asking for the promise to be fulfilled. God has not forgotten him. The promise gives him something to hold to within his trial. Augustine carries that hope as far as the Church's resurrection. Christ's gift reaches beyond the span of a recovered earthly life to life with God. That hope leaves us free to seek help, to care for the sick, and to grieve with those who grieve. None of those acts requires us to predict the outcome.

Now listen again to the father asking the servants about the hour. Their answer changes his understanding of the journey he has just made. While he was still on the road, unable to see his son, the child was already well. The healing had not waited for his arrival. What he learns now is what Christ had done when he spoke.

That is a greater discovery than finding that he had managed to be brave. His confidence has an object: the Lord who gave life to his son. The matching hour directs us to the power and mercy of the one he believed. He has reason to give thanks. He can name the gift and the giver.

This matters when we hear the Church ask for healing at the altar. The Secret asks that these mysteries give heavenly medicine and cleanse the vices of our hearts. We need more than an inspiring example of someone who acted courageously. We need Christ himself to heal what makes our love crooked. The Eucharistic gift answers that need.

The Collect asks for pardon and peace so that we may serve God with a secure mind. That peace has its source in received mercy. When we acknowledge a fault, we do not have to protect an imagined innocence at all costs. We have a Savior from whom to seek pardon. And when the Church asks after Communion that we may obey God's commandments, she asks for help to live from his gift. The father was sent home by the Lord's word; the faithful are sustained in obedience by the Lord whose gifts they receive.

John's last sentence opens the door of the whole house. The father believes, and his household believes. The healing has brought more than relief to one anxious man. Christ has become the ground of a shared faith. The father sought help for his son, and the mercy has reached people beyond the two of them.

Notice how the servants belong to that ending. The father receives their testimony. These people who serve in his house know something he needs to hear. He asks them, listens to them, and recognizes Christ's action through what they tell him. Faith brings him into a deeper dependence on the Lord, and the story also gives him a reason to attend to the people around him. The Epistle's mutual service has a home to enter.

We cannot promise our households this father's cure. We can bring home the truth on which his thanksgiving rests: mercy comes from Christ, and it can become a good that others share. An honest admission, freed from the need to defend ourselves, can let the people closest to us encounter the fruit of pardon. The faith we profess begins to change the life we have together.

The father went home believing a word. He learned on the road that Christ's mercy had already reached his child. At the end, the house itself is filled with faith. Let our homes receive the fruit of what Christ gives us here. Let those who live with us find people who know their need for mercy, and who have learned where mercy is found.

Source and Delivery Note

For an adult parish assembly on the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost, 11 October 2026, in the 1962 Roman Missal. This homily follows the expansive study's reading *The word heals and teaches faith*, with the compatible relation between lament and hope developed in *Learning thanksgiving in exile*. Its decisive detail is the father's departure in John 4:50 before the servants' confirmation in 4:51–53. The matching hour reveals mercy already given during the unseen journey, and the household's belief makes its fruit communal. The Epistle's wise conduct and mutual service, and the prayers for pardon, medicine and obedience, join this growth in trust and shared faith.

The speech contains 1,377 spoken words. At 115–125 words per minute, its estimated duration is 11.0–12.0 minutes. A silent editorial read-through checked sentence sense, transitions and oral clarity; no audible rehearsal or timed human delivery is claimed. This note and the references are outside the speech. The homily applies in either commemoration branch: it makes no claim that the conditional Maternity prayers are said at every Mass. It is authored preaching prose, not an official liturgical text.

References

Appointed Scripture and prayers

John 4:46b–53; Ephesians 5:15–21; Psalms 136:1 (137) and 118:49–50 (119). Biblical quotations follow Douay–Rheims–Challoner, Project Gutenberg eBook 1581. *Missale Romanum*, Vatican, 1962, Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost, pp. 412–413: Collect, Secret and Postcommunion. The prayers are explained, not supplied as substitute translations or recited prayers. The full texts and their historical witnesses belong to the companion expansive study.

Gregory the Great

Homilies on the Gospels, II.28.1, on the ruler's faith and Christ's power without bodily travel. Latin Wikisource transcription, contributors including Mizardellorsa, CC BY-SA 3.0: https://la.wikisource.org/wiki/Homiliarum_in_Evangelia. The homily paraphrases Gregory's argument. It does not attribute to Augustine Gregory's account of the ruler's initial faith.

John Chrysostom and Augustine

Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians*, XIX, exposition of 5:15–17 and 5:21, NPNF I.13: prudent fidelity and reciprocal service. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, Ps. 118, §§50–51 (NPNF I.8, heading Ps. 119): remembrance as fulfilment of a promise and comfort for Christ's body under trial, reaching to resurrection.

Liturgical reception

Ildefonso Schuster, *The Sacramentary*, Arthur Levelis-Marke's translation, III (1927), "Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost," pp. 175–178: pardon and peaceful service, Eucharistic nourishment and medicine, hope and obedient reception. Historical biblical and NPNF English and Schuster's text retain their recorded United States public-domain status; the project license covers the original exposition.

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