Saturday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time
St. Joseph in the Desert Monastery
Lucerne Valley, California, October 31, 2026

Readings: Philippians 1:18b–26; Psalm 41; Luke 14:1, 7–11

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if living in the body means bearing fruit, I really do not know which to choose." (Phil 1:21-22)

St. Paul explains his dilemma to the Philippians: on the one hand, his longing for Christ is so great that he would like to die so he could be with Him forever; on the other hand, he understands that by living, he can still serve Christ—proclaiming Him and working to build up His Church.
Paul does not know what to choose, but he knows very well that the best choice we can make in life is not to choose for ourselves, but to let ourselves be chosen by the Lord—to let Him decide about our life and our death, to decide where and how we can best serve Him, whether in Heaven with Him or on earth, following the footsteps of His presence in the world.

In this, Saint Paul echoes the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, which Saint John records in his Gospel: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" (Jn 15:16).

Allowing ourselves to be chosen by the Lord—by obeying His will for us—is the secret to our peace, but also the secret to the fruitfulness of our life and vocation.
We are not, however, asked to obey God's choice for us in a way that denies our freedom, because God does not choose us to be His slaves, but His friends. God chooses us because He loves us, prefers us, and desires to be loved by us. Thus, the service God asks of us by choosing us becomes for us the real and concrete space in which we can express our love for the Lord, returning the friendship He offers us freely and forever.

The Gospel we have just heard also speaks to us about this. In fact, what Jesus tells us regarding the place we should occupy at banquets helps us understand that the last place—which humility leads us to choose—is not merely so that we may be honored by an unexpected promotion, but so that we may allow the Lord to choose where He wants to place us. The last seat is where we wait humbly and trustingly for God to place us in the right spot to serve Him and be with Him. So, when the Lord chooses the good place in our lives, the surprise is that the place God chooses for us is that of a friend, of friendship with Him: "Friend, come sit higher up!" (Lk 14:10)

To be called by the Lord to go further means to be drawn by his love to contemplate his Face, responding to his desire to take pleasure in our face, in our presence before him.

This is the deepest desire of our hearts, as we prayed in the responsorial psalm:
"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and see the face of God?" (Ps 41:3)

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