

Twelfth Week of Ordinary Time (English)
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Latin)
June 21, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi” (Ancient Latin Maxim)

As we proceed to read and reflect upon The First Apology of Saint Justin Martyr, I would like us to keep in our minds the ancient Latin maxim which translates into: ***Lex orandi*** (how we worship), ***Lex credendi*** (what we believe), ***Lex vivendi*** (how we live). In essence, the way we pray and worship shapes what we believe which in turn determines how we choose to conduct our lives. It is my intention, in the following reflections, to repeat this first paragraph so we may have a visible reminder each time we read. Likewise, I will present key statements from Saint Justin, using our Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass) as a benchmark.

“And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. . . And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.” (Saint Justin, First Apology)

Some might not have known the Collection, collecting of material goods for the needs of the community, would date back to early Christianity. However when we look to Sacred Scripture, we are able to read instances where the paying of the Temple tax or the taking up of a collection are mentioned. We can read in Saint Luke’s Gospel the story of the “Widow’s mite” (Luke 21:1-4) as an example. One of the best examples, we can find in the New Testament, will be taken from Saint Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians. *“Now in regard to the collection for the holy ones, you also should do as I ordered the churches of Galatia. On the first day of the week each of you should set aside and save whatever one can afford, so that collections will not be going on when I come. And when I arrive, I shall send those whom you have approved with letters of recommendation to take your gracious gift to Jerusalem. If it seems fitting that I should go also, they will go with me”* (1 Corinthians 16:1-4).

One might ask: “Were collections common before Saint Paul’s writings or was the collection a new thing invented by Saint Paul?” This question offers much material to reflect upon. We must begin by stating collections were not something “new” invented by Saint Paul or Christians. Collections were already a common practice in Jewish synagogues. Early Christians, such as Saint Paul, would have been raised to assist with the needs of widows and orphans through collections offered in various synagogues. Please remember God often encourages His Children in the Old Testament to be aware of the needs of widows and orphans. A collection would be a means to provide sustenance for those who found themselves in either position. The “Christian” understanding of the collection, presented by Saint Paul, would stress the importance of **one, universal Christian community**. This idea of one, universal Christian faith is very important for

Saint Paul and will shape Christianity forever. Each Sunday, as we recite our Creed, we again stress this universal oneness of Christianity. We might identify with a parish (Saint Thomas the Apostle or Saint Bridget), but we are all members of one, universal Christian family. We are members of the Body of Christ with Jesus as our Head. By Saint Paul placing importance on “Gentile” Christians joining with “Jewish” Christians, he is tearing down this notion of two separate Christian communities. As an example, you may remember when the tornado struck the University of Alabama and members of the Auburn community went to assist in the recovery. We may align with different teams, cities, states, or countries, but we, who are baptized, are all part of one Body of Christ.

For Saint Justin, and those Christians of his time, material possessions were just as important then as they are in our time. People need material possessions to live. We need food, water and shelter. Without these, we may find life hard and difficult to the point of starvation, exposure or death. The generosity shown in a collection will become symbolic of a death. We die to our wants to assist with another’s needs. Widows and orphans were still present in the Christian community of Saint Justin. Their livelihood was still a concern of the Christian community. Through this form of almsgiving, a second idea would develop in Christian spirituality. Our faith is ultimately based upon God and not upon what material wealth we possess. We can lose everything we own currently, even our lives, but no thing on earth has the ability to take our faith from us. This is seen quite often in the aftermath of a natural disaster. We realize what few things we genuinely need and how generous others are who provide through their means to assist us in our recovery. The collection is important because it allows for grace to be given to those who give and also to those who receive.