

Nineteenth Week of Ordinary Time (English)
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (Latin)
August 9, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:14)

This weekend we begin our transition from the age of the “Apostolic Fathers” and “Apologists,” toward the time of the “Alexandrians.” Saint Irenaeus of Lyons serves as this transitioning link for us. We begin with a brief introduction. Saint Irenaeus was raised in Asia Minor. He is considered one of the great Christian bishops of the “Third Christian Generation.” He had known and studied under Saint Polycarp who himself had learned at the feet of the Apostle, Saint John. Saint Irenaeus would, as an adult, move to Lyons (Roman province of Gaul, later known as France) where he would become a priest. During the reign of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 177-178), the Bishop of the city, Saint Pothinus, was martyred. Saint Irenaeus would succeed him as Bishop of Lyons and spend himself serving the Christian community as both a pastor and a teacher. During this time, a heresy was spreading through the Christian community called Gnosticism. Gnosticism, loosely defined, was a generalized description of a culmination of religious beliefs based on the etymology of the word *gnosis* “knowledge.” It was viewed as a corruption of both Judaism and Christianity which taught the soul of a person attains its proper end by the obedience of its mind and will to God through both faith and works. Gnosticism, rather, held the salvation of a person centered upon the possession of a quasi-intuitive knowledge of the mysteries of the universe and of a “Divine Truth.” This knowledge was secret, known only by followers of Gnosticism, who had become quite adept at offering this knowledge to select people of means. In his famous work, *Against the Heresies*, Saint Irenaeus would devote considerable ink to systematically describing beliefs held by followers of Gnosticism and offer proper Christian counterpoints to those beliefs. Another of his writings, the one we shall reflect upon, was “*The Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*.” Within this work, Saint Irenaeus sought to confirm the Christian doctrine by expounding upon and demonstrating the truth of the Christian Traditions and Gospels by means of the Old Testament. This document has become known as a magnificent testimony of the deep and lively faith of both Saint Irenaeus and early Christianity.

“For piety is clouded and loses its lustre by contamination, by impurity of body, and is broken and stained and loses its integrity when falsehood enters the soul; but it will be preserved in beauty and measure by the constant abiding of truth in the mind and of holiness in the body. For what is the use of knowing the truth in word, while defiling the body and accomplishing the works of evil? Or what real good at all can bodily holiness do, if truth be not in the soul?”
(Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching).

Saint Irenaeus begins his explanation of the truth of the Christian faith, found prefigured throughout the Old Testament, by first explaining Faith. One may define Faith as: “a supernatural virtue by which we firmly believe all the truths which God has revealed to us, and which He teaches through the unchanging and perennial Magisterium of His Church, because He is truth itself” (*Credo*, question 66 — What is faith?). This would be a modern definition of Faith, but this definition had to begin with a foundational explanation. For Saint Irenaeus, Faith, believing in those truths revealed by God through both Sacred Scripture and Tradition are fundamental to

being a Christian. Allow me to illustrate using the principle of time. To understand our End, we must understand our Beginning. And, once accepted, we strive toward that End.

Let us consider this through the use of two questions. One will be a general question and the other a more specific question. Question 1 — Why did God create? Question 2 — Why did God create me?

The answer to the first question is found in answering the second. God created me to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this life so that I may be happy with Him for all eternity. Put simply, God created me because He wanted to share with me the love He has within Himself. God is the total, complete, perfection of Love. And, He wants to share this with me. Turning to the first question, God created everything to present everything to me as a revelation of Who He is and His Love for me. Churches will often send out reminders to inactive families asking them to return to the communal worship of God as a member of His Family. We have done similar things through cards, letters, phone calls and text messages. A religious leader might become discouraged when those calls to return fall upon deaf ears or hard hearts assuming they have failed in returning the lost sheep to the fold. This is not the case when one considers everything created by God. God's reminders are present all around us of His Love for us. From the sound of the birds, the feel of cool drops of rain, the gentle breeze on a warm summer's day, the brightness of stars on a winter's night, the sound of a baby's cry or the presence of our beloved pet, these are all reminders to each of us. God created all to remind me that He is present.

However, due to the Fall of Man in the Garden, our intellects have been dulled by sin and we might not see everything as His reminder of His Presence. It is only to those who have taken the time to STOP, LOOK, LISTEN and THINK that these reminders are visible. As we know, not all will either recognize these reminders, due to their limited ability, or, for most, take the time to perform these necessary steps. Therefore, God will choose to reveal Himself in a definitive way. He will become man. He will establish, guide and inspire a church (a group of believers) who will devote themselves to the message of reminding mankind of His Love for each of them. For Saint Irenaeus, God has done this through revealing Himself in the life and beliefs of the Christian community. The revelation of God and His Love begins with the Jewish people and their Scriptures. It will find its fullness (everything needed for our End — eternal life with Him) through the Christian Faith, both Sacred Scripture and Tradition.