

# **THE THIRTY FIRST WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME**



**SUN**      **THE SOLEMNITY OF ALL THE SAINTS**  
**Nov. 1**    **Our Key to God's Heavenly Kingdom**  
A reflection inspired by a text of Carroll Stuhlmueller

**MON**      **The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed**  
**2**          **Our Salvation as a Task of Loving**  
Excerpts from St. Catherine of Genoa & Carroll Stuhlmueller

**TUES**     **Memorial of St. Martin de Porres**  
**3**          **Loving Like Christ in Simple Ways**  
A reflection by Pope St. John XXIII

**WED**      **Memorial of St. Charles Borromeo**  
**4**          **The Vital Importance of Saintly Models**  
From a reflection by St. Gregory of Nyssa

**THURS**    **Thursday of the Thirty First Week of Ordinary Time**  
**5**          **What Happens Beyond Death?**  
A reflection based on a text by Dianne Bergant

**FRI**        **Friday of the Thirty First Week in Ordinary Time**  
**6**          **A Vision of What We Seek**  
A rhapsody by Fr. Karl Adam

**SAT**        **Memorial of Our Lady**  
**7**          **Learning to Trust in God's Mercy**  
A reflection by St. Pope John Paul II



# **Our Key to God's Heavenly Kingdom**

**A reflection inspired by a text of Carroll Stuhlmueller**

**“All Saints” is a celebration of all the men and women, girls and boys, adults and infants whom God has chosen to share Divine Life. They are mostly not noticed. They haven't obviously done heroic deeds, become martyrs, confessed the faith under terrible threats or in great suffering and perhaps haven't—in the case of the infants—even performed works of kindness or Christ-like love. Those same saints have lived their faith in a matter-of-fact and take-it-for granted way. After a generation or two they are not specially remembered and become absorbed, so to speak, in the generations that came after them in faith. With “all the saints” they have lost themselves, as they wished, in God—who never forgets them.**

**The Book of Revelation reminds us that saints come from everywhere. This is symbolized by the number 144,000. It is twelve times twelve multiplied by a thousand. Twelve symbolized completeness and here that completeness is multiplied by a thousand. There are, in short, too many to count, “from every land, and nation, and people and language”. In Scripture some of the twelve tribes were quickly forgotten—like Gad and Simeon. Yet all the tribes and all their members were and are equally called by God, and so made holy by God. The Second Vatican Council describes this as the “universal call to holiness”.**

**The Gospels provide more detailed instructions. Take the Beatitudes as an example. Who has not felt a thirst for holiness at some moment? Who hasn't felt poor in spirit or sorrowed or felt lowly or sensed a single-minded dedication or tried to bring peace where there was strife. These are very ordinary realities but from the perspective of trusting faith in God they become ideals calling us to imitate our Lord himself. In the bond created by faith—within the extended family of the Church, or of the human family we belong to, or in our neighborhood or community we realize what sort of service these seemingly ordinary feelings and attributes call us to. We console others, forget ourselves in service, share all we have, and strive to single heartedly love God as does our Lord.**

**Jesus uses the Beatitudes to draw us together in the reality of our daily lives and shows us the opportunities for sanctity that are right here. They are like promises! They come true through living as members of a family formed by faith: See the love God has given us in calling us “my children”! Yet that is what we are! So we see that the call to be spontaneously open to God's presence and working in us at every moment—like the “Good Samaritan”—is designed to make us like God. That is what purity of heart is, fundamentally. To accept this call, to share it with others, is to be transformed by God. We become able to see God just as God is. That is our call and our sanctity.**

# **The Task of Loving & Our Salvation**

**A reflection by St. Catherine of Genoa & Carroll Stuhlmueller**

Here is a simple statement of what most Christians today believe about the state of the faithful departed. It is presented by Carroll Stuhlmueller, a modern Scriptural scholar: “They are on the final stage before reaching heaven. They have died and been judged faithful. They have already glimpsed the presence of God, and of Jesus, in a way far more intense and intimate than ever upon earth. Their desire and thirst for God both tantalizes and strengthens them. They are joyful with this desire, for they already possess what they seek; they are sorrowful in their desire, for they do not completely possess what they seek. Their pain, consequently, is evoked by the intensity of their desire. This pain is purifying, for it springs from love and partial possession. The more it purifies the greater their love and the fuller their possession of God.”

St. Catherine of Genoa makes the same points more poetically: “There is no joy save that in paradise that is comparable to the joy of the souls in purgatory. As the rust of sin is consumed the soul is more and more open to God’s love. Having become one with God’s will these souls, to the extent that God grants, see into God. Joy in God, oneness with God, is the goal of such souls, an instinct implanted in them at their creation. When God sees the soul pure as it was in its origin God tugs at it with a lance that draws it and binds it to God with a fiery love. God so transforms the soul in himself that it knows nothing other than God. He will not cease until he has brought the soul to its perfection. The soul seeks to cast off every impediment and it is these which are the cause of its suffering. God shows the soul its weakness, so that it may see the workings of God in it. The change must be brought about in us and without us; the change must be the work not of human beings but of God.”

These efforts to picture what God has in store for those who have begun to love him, and in him love all others here on earth is based on the understanding that the goal God has in mind for all is to enter into God’s own loving and love with and in God. The message is that we should pray for the grace to let the love of God completely dominate within us and seek always to love God more perfectly and more like Jesus. The purpose of the teaching is to set us on fire with the longing to love God with all our heart and soul and strength. That is the love we see in Jesus. Knowing Jesus is one of us, a human being as well as a divine being, we know that the love for God which filled him can also fill us. It will not be a merely human love but a work of grace—a work of God in and with and through us. Each day we begin again to strive to love God more and in all the things we do, small or great.

# **Loving Like Christ in Simple Ways**

**A reflection by St. Pope John XXIII**

Martin de Porres was not given life's advantages but, because of his mixed racial background, he was denied opportunities open to those of "pure race" Yet this did not seem to him important in comparison with the great good that was shared with him, that of knowing Jesus Christ. The example of his life gives us abundant evidence that all can strive for holiness and receive the salvation that Jesus Christ offers. He shows us how to love God with all the heart, and soul and mind. He shows us how to love the neighbor as oneself. He was popularly known by his fellows as "Martin the charitable".

He knew that Jesus Christ suffered for all of us, and for him, and that Jesus had borne our sins in his own body on the cross; he responded with deep love of Jesus. He was known for remarkable ardor in meditating on the cross of Christ and the terrible pains Christ bore for our sakes. He was very often reduced to tears by the simple thought of them. This led him to an exceptional dedication to the Eucharist and to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. He rejoiced whenever he was able to receive holy communion—in a time when most were not allowed to receive it frequently.

Although he always strove to be obedient and to model himself on Jesus he continually gave more to the poor than was thought proper. He loved all, and especially the poor, as though they were his brothers and sisters and cared for them more than for himself. He was humble and always ready to think of others as better than himself. He did not blame anyone for his situation or its difficulties but considered that he deserved bad things because of his sins—even as he over-looked the sins of others.

He liked to sit with the sick and to spend time with jailed prisoners. He gave away food and medicine to the poor, and especially to those of mixed race who were ordinarily looked down upon or treated like slaves. His example and his words had a powerful influence and drew others to God and to the Church. If we all learned to do what Martin did by contemplating Jesus and the Cross our world would be a different, and better, place. Nothing seemed to him more important than striving to follow in Christ's footsteps, obey God's commandments, and walk the road to salvation with Christ. He did all this in very meager circumstances and by small acts of kindness and concern and generosity.

Martin simply loved those he met and sought to share with them his own love for Christ. If we too do this then we too will soon be of the company of saints in which he now rejoices for ever. Nothing special is required and no special circumstances and resources are needed. Our only need is humble and joyful love.

# **The Vital Importance of Sainly Models**

A reflection by St. Gregory of Nyssa

When a single candle is lighted and used to light many other candles the original light is not diminished no matter how many lights are kindled from it. That is the way it is with sharing the love and light of Christ. By sharing God's gifts with others no one loses but all gain, and the gain is greater the more the gift of life in Christ is shared.

If you come upon a person who is literally between life and death, and find that person reflecting on what is best no matter the consequences, but eager above all to live the divine commandments, then you have a model for your own life. We who have found Christ do not shuffle or stamp our feet in distress at letting go of what is simply a worldly desire. We seek deeds of virtue of the sort which show that one is living the life of the Spirit. God has made this kind of behavior the goal for all who are called to share divine life. This ideal should serve us the way the stars serve the pilot of a ship. That way we find the port of safety and everlasting life.

Some, however, find their eyes too weak to tolerate the brightness of Christ's light. Some cannot even contemplate steadily the chorus of saints who live in that light. There are many holy ones, some young and some old, who are out-standing in self-control and purity of heart and show that they love wisdom more than any physical pleasure or form of wealth. Yes, the flesh lusts against the spirit, but those who have listened well to God and God's Christ have found the tree of life that is true wisdom. That tree is like a raft that they can use to float above the waters that drown others. They actually shine with a light that serves as a beacon for others who have not yet found the raft of salvation.

Having someone to whom one can look helps one sail securely through every storm of temptation. We are often curious about those who have sought this but faltered along the way. We may ask why they faltered. Sometimes such reflections lead people to despair of themselves. In that case, one needs to look to those who have not faltered and so find rather encouragement.

These people did not succeed by their own strength or by reason of a superior endowment. They looked to the One God, and to the One who succeeded in living for God the sake of us all. They need to see how ready He is to share his light and strength with us, who lack it if left by ourselves. It is the wisdom and light of the Holy Spirit that Christ offers us as our pilot in the midst of storms. Those who go down to the sea in ships and labor among the deep waters are not scared off; they are sustained by hope. Yes, there are shipwrecks. But we have an even more secure hope in the one who always strengthens those who turn to Him.

# **What Happens Beyond Death?**

**A reflection based on a text by Dianne Bergant**

**There is no doubt that human beings are sinful. We not only do wrong things inadvertently, but sometimes we do evil things deliberately. Yet we know that everyone is not either a saint or a sinner but that all struggle throughout life to keep our attraction to what is bad in check and to strengthen our love for what is good. It is probably most accurate to say that there is good and bad in us all and that all of us struggle to maintain balance when faced by conflicting attractions. Fortunately or unfortunately there is no universally agreed upon determination as to how to do this or about what the “right” balance is. Add to this the religious conviction that only the truly righteous may stand in the presence of God, the all-holy, and you see how badly all of us need to reform, and do it before death comes!**

**This is a way of picturing life, and the “judgment” we believe follows death. It is a way of picturing what happens beyond death, probably based on Jesus’ parable of the final judgment as a separating of sheep from goats. From this point of view, the common teaching on what we call “purgatory” is a way of imaging how God’s mercy deals with those who die before they have completed the process of reform. The teaching proclaims that God’s merciful love for us is never thwarted, even by death. As the Book of Wisdom puts the matter, even for the dead there is a hope “filled with immortality”. Clearly the meaning is that the never ending life of those who are with God in the Kingdom of Heaven is a gift which God will give us in spite of the fact that we can’t make ourselves perfect or worthy to be in His presence. Hope is grounded not in any deed or capacity of our own but in God’s love for us. That truth is embodied in the teaching on purgatory.**

**This is why the commemoration of the all the faithful departed, created first by our monastic forbears, teaches us such important truths. It reminds us, first of all, that we must reform our lives. This is what made monastic life a model for all Christians, as the Eastern Church has so strongly emphasized. Again, it reminds us that death separates us neither from God nor from one another. It reminds us forcefully that our love for one another finds its fulfillment only when we love God with all our heart, mind and strength. In that love we find the fulfillment of our love for each other. The commemoration invites us to trust in God’s never failing love. It doesn’t answer people’s questions about what life beyond death will be like, or even what continued purification will be like. It calls us rather to just trust God and walk steadily toward God, until we find ourselves in the eternally embracing arms. Walk confidently but with a confidence not coming from yourself. Walk in love, but in a love that is really Christ’s. Walk in peace, and as St. Augustine said, sing praise as you walk.**

# **A Vision of What We Seek**

A rhapsody by Fr. Karl Adam

The hosts of the redeemed continually flow into Heaven, directly and by the indirect path of purification. They come into the presence of the Lamb and the One who sits on the Throne. Face to face they contemplate the Trinity, in which is every possibility and reality, and from this eternal well-spring of life all drink existence and strength, motion and beauty, truth and love. There is none who has not been brought home by God's pure mercy. All are redeemed, from the highest to the premature child just sealed by the grace of baptism. All are delivered from self-imposed limitations and raised above anxiety; all live within that sphere of love which is the great life of God. It is no idle or stagnate life but a continual activity of sense and intellect and will. The Kingdom of Heaven is established and grace has finished its work.

The life of glory is far richer than the life of grace. The infinite spaces of God's being provide a spring from which the soul seeks and finds the satisfaction of its most intimate yearnings. New possibilities continually reveal themselves, new vistas of truth, new springs of joy. Being incorporated in the most sacred humanity of Jesus, the soul is joined in mysterious intimacy to the Godhead itself. It hears the heartbeats of God and feels the deep life that pulsates within the Divine Trinity. The soul lives at the center of all being, whence the sources of all life flow, where the meaning of all existence shines forth in the triune God, where all power and all beauty, all peace and all blessedness, are become pure actuality and purest present, an eternal now.

This life of the saints, in its superabundant and inexhaustible fruitfulness, is at the same time a life of the richest variety and fullness. The One Spirit of Jesus, the head and mediator, is manifest in the saints in all the rich variety of their individual lives, and according to the measure of the special gifts and call of each as shown forth by the grace of God. Even though all have special gifts and a special life, yet all are united in one single love and in one joy and gladness. Such is the fullness toward which our daily struggle to love and serve leads us.

# **Learning to Trust in God's Mercy**

**A reflection by St. Pope John Paul II**

**O Mary, Mother of Mercy, watch over all people that the cross of Christ may not be emptied of its power, that our race may not stray from the path of good or become blind to its sin but may put all hope ever more firmly in God who is so rich in mercy. May God carry out the good works prepared from of old so that all may live wholly for God's praise and glory. (From Veritatis Splendor)**

**Mary is the human person who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows the price that has been paid because her own son paid it. She knows how great it is because she knows her own son's compassionate love. She is our Lady of Mercy and mother of Divine Mercy incarnate. In each of these titles there is deep religious meaning. Each expresses the special gifts given to her in preparation for her vocation, not only in bringing Jesus to birth but in the role he gave her from the cross as the mother of us all. God prepared her entire personality for these roles and so she became able to perceive though the complex of events that were her life, the grace of God to Israel and to every individual human person from generation to generation. All of this, she saw, was according to the eternal designs of the most holy and merciful Trinity.**

**I want to proclaim to you all the joy announced by the prophet Isaiah and lived by Mary. It is the joy of God's salvific gift which comes to you through your personal vocation as the unrepeatable expression of God's confidence in you and love for you. Remember that the power of Christ's Paschal Mystery supplies for your weakness and fills your hearts with empowering love. When we come to communion we come to a moment of commitment and renewed commitment. "Come, follow me!" That is what Christ says to each of us, as God said it to Mary through the words of the Angel Gabriel. Through the grace which filled her, God enabled Mary to accept his call with all her heart. As one who had obtained mercy in a marvelous way she becomes the model and mother of divine mercy extended to us through her Son, Jesus Christ.**

**Divine Mercy accompanied her throughout her life, and most especially at the foot of the cross of her Son. In that cross Jesus reveals God's mercy, and to Mary who shared in that cross in a special way he gives the task of bringing to us a deeper appreciation of that mercy. It never fails! Each is, in each deed done, an actual instrument of Divine Mercy as expressed in love. If that thought accompanies you then grace accompanies you. You too can be filled with grace. Walking in that grace is one of the ways Mary shows forth God's mercy. She shows us how to be bearers of that mercy, day by day and throughout each day until we enter the never ending day of God's eternity.**