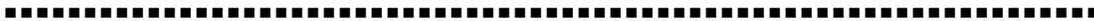


NINETEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME



- Sunday** **The Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Aug 7 **Remembering to What We are Called**
A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant
- Mon** **Memorial of St. Dominic**
8 **St. Dominic's Faith-Filled Prayer**
A reflection taken from a text by an anonymous Dominican
- Tues** **Memorial of St. Teresa, Benedicta of the Cross**
9 **Contemplation and Compassion**
A reflection developed from a text by Waltraud Herbstrith
- Wed** **Feast of St. Lawrence the Deacon**
10 **Imitating Christ with St. Lawrence**
A reflection developed from a sermon of St. Augustine of Hippo
- Thurs** **Memorial of St. Clare, Virgin**
11 **Our Treasure is God Alone**
A reflection developed from a letter of St. Clare
- Fri** **Friday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time**
12 **Putting First Things First**
A reflection developed from a sermon by Fr. John Tauler
- Sat** **Memorial of Our Lady**
13 **Mary, the Perfect Christian**
A reflection from Mary, Mother of the Lord, by Fr. Karl Rahner



Remembering to What We Are Called

A reflection developed from a text by Dianne Bergant

Scripture, as illustrated by the texts chosen for this Sunday's Eucharist, reminds us constantly that we are called to practical faith and holds up, as examples for us to imitate, those who have walked this path before us. Today, for instance, we hear about Abraham and Sarah. He clung to God's promise and she clung to his faith and they waited and hoped even when, by ordinary standards, there was no good reason to hope any longer. These were people who had no hope for a better life after their death; descendants were the only future they could understand. What faith required of them was to put this future in God's hands. God had promised them a wonderful future and so they waited upon God, until the time God—not they—chose.

When will God's "time" come for us, and for our loved ones, and for our community? Jesus says that we are to wait upon God's time just as slaves waited for the return of a master from a wedding celebration. This sort of celebration didn't just last all night but could go on for several weeks. Nobody had any idea how long their Lord would spend at the celebration before coming home. But they knew that someone had to be there at the door to let him in no matter when he came.

This example is especially pertinent in Jesus' case. He had gone to the Heavenly Wedding Celebration but has told us he will come back—and take us to join in the celebration too. But when will he come? Jesus actually told the disciples that he didn't know! He would come when the Heavenly Father told him to! People waste their time if they busy themselves trying to figure out when the Second Coming will take place!

And in the meantime our world is one of extreme insecurity. How many have been driven from their homes, and homelands, and have nowhere to go? When will the Lord come to set things right? The answer seems to be that he comes whenever he calls us to help set things right. God's promises are about a future, and a supremely good future, but we are forbidden to relax and let things take their course. To be ready for the Lord's call to come and join him, not just in the Heavenly Wedding Celebration but in preparing the way for all sorts of others to take part in that celebration, we have to busy ourselves now in helping one another.

We have to help others hope, even when there seems to be no good reason to hope. We too are in a situation very like that of Abraham and Sarah. And we are forbidden to leave things in God's hands and do nothing constructive. Be ready to be called to go places and do things you never imagined. That's what was demanded of Abraham and Sarah, and it is demanded of us, as it was of Jesus. We have to be ready to share in all that he did, and suffered. We have to be ready to trust that where God leads us, there we will find the door that admits us into God's celebration.

Weddings are celebrations of practical, mutual love. We are called to help one another, even if with just a smile or a helping hand. Be ready with a faith that is not afraid to do whatever is practically necessary to help others come and share the realization of God's promises.

St. Dominic's Faith-Filled Prayer

Developed from a reflection by an anonymous Dominican

Our holy father, Dominic, had a beautiful way of expressing his faith in prayer. He was filled with grace and devotion. For instance, after praying the canonical hours of the Divine Office, and even the Grace said after meals, he would go off quietly by himself to his cell or to some other quiet place. He seemed to be especially sober and alert. People thought that the divinely given words with which we had prayed had, so to speak, anointed him with the spirit of devotion and he sought to go on praying.

When he had found a suitable place he sat down to read in preparation for prayer. He seemed to be recollecting himself and fixing his inner eye on God and God's presence in the Divine Word. Thus he would open a book, make the sign of the Cross and begin to read. What struck those who witnessed this was that he seemed to be moved inwardly—sometimes with delight as though he was hearing the Lord speak to him. A psalm says: "I will hear what the Lord God is saying within me", and he gave the impression he was doing just that.

At times he seemed to be arguing, though as with a close friend. Again, it seemed that he was impatient, sometimes agreeing emphatically by nodding his head energetically, and at other moments he would appear to be listening quietly, or disputing or struggling over something. At one time he would laugh and weep, both at the same time! He would seem to fix his gaze on someone and become submissive and beat his breast.

Those who were inquisitive enough to spy on him in this way got the impression he was acting like Moses in the innermost desert, beholding the burning bush and hearing the Lord speak to him. He seemed always to feel called to humble himself. He had a wonderful way of passing quickly from reading to prayer and from meditating to contemplating. In all this he seemed absolutely filled with faith and trust in God.

He used to venerate the books he was reading as instruments of God's presence, bowing toward them and kissing them. This was especially the case with books of the Gospels or when he had been reading a quotation from the words of the Lord. Sometimes he would hide his face in his scapular or bury it in his hands, and then he would show signs of anxiety and of yearning. He would rise and bow slightly, as though he were thanking someone with special respect. Whatever his demeanor he always went from his prayers seeming at peace in himself and very much refreshed.

We remember all this as a way of learning from our Holy Father how to pray, just as Jesus had taught his disciples and apostles. We too seek to find the Lord in prayer and speak to him personally and from the heart. That is what our Father did so beautifully.

Contemplation & Compassion

A reflection developed from a text by Waltraud Herbstrith

Edith Stein, a Jew who had fallen away from observance, received a doctorate in philosophy at the age of 23 with a dissertation on the nature of empathy. One night in 1921, as she was reading the autobiography of Teresa of Avila, she was struck by conviction: “This is the truth!” she said to herself. She was baptized the following New Year’s Day.

In 1932 she was given an academic appointment to the University of Muster but a year later she was dismissed because the Nazis had come to power and begun their campaign against Jews. She wrote, *“I spoke with the Savior, to tell him that I realized it was his Cross that was now being laid upon the Jewish People, that the few who understood this had the responsibility of carrying it in the name of all, and that I myself was willing to do this if he would only show me how.”* She decided that God called her to enter the Carmelites and she did in 1934.

She took the name “Sister Teresa ‘Blessed by the Cross’—“Benedicta a Cruce”. After the Kristallnacht she let herself be smuggled into Holland for the sake of the other Carmelite sisters in Germany, but when the Dutch bishops wrote a pastoral letter condemning persecution of the Jews, she and all other Jewish Christians were arrested and destined for death camps. Her sister, Rosa, mentally handicapped, lived with her in the convent, and when the Nazis came to arrest her she told Rosa: “Come, we’re going for our people.” She occupied herself with prayer and in the compassionate task of carrying for terrified children. She did this in the internment camp and on the journey in boxcars to Auschwitz, where she and Rosa died in the gas chambers on August 9, 1942.

What was remarkable about her was not the manner of her death or what she suffered but her very clear understanding of what was happening and the reasons why she should accept, even welcome death so calmly. She was to offer her life in solidarity with the Jewish People, her people, as an act of atonement for the evils of her time and as a way of consciously identifying herself and them with Christ on the Cross. She saw herself called to live the truth she had read about in the words of St. Teresa of Avila by accepting the gift of Christian faith and Christ’s death. She turned to God as a Carmelite nun dedicated to prayer, though also to writing about the spirituality of St. John of the Cross. Her faith told her that this was what God had called her to do. In faith and in trust in God’s love for her, for her People, and for the entire human race she accepted this death. She knew it was a death with Christ. She knew it was the way God called her to fill up what still was wanting in the sufferings of Christ for others. She did it without ever flagging in prayer, even entering into the gas chamber.

Imitating Christ with St. Lawrence

A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Augustine of Hippo

We must imitate Christ if we truly love him. We will not be able to offer any better return for the love shown us than by modelling our lives on that of Christ. Christ suffered for us, leavening us an example, so that we might follow in his steps. In saying this, the Apostle Peter sounds as though Christ suffered only for those who follow in his footsteps. Is Christ's passion really of no avail to those who do not imitate him? The holy Martyrs follow Christ even to the shedding of their life's blood, even to reproducing the likeness of his passion—indeed they followed him. But they are not the only ones. It is not true that the bridge to heaven was broken after the martyrs crossed over, nor is it true that after they had drunk from the fountain of eternal life it dried up.

So the Roman Church extols the example given by its Deacon, Lawrence, in a yearly celebration. Yes, in Rome he ministered the sacred blood of Christ and for the sake of Christ he poured out his own blood. But he did much more; he gave us an example of marvelous charity, without which even martyrdom gains one nothing. John the Apostle points out that *“just as Christ laid down his life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”* Lawrence understood this and acted on it. As he had partaken of Christ's gift of self at the Lord's Table, so he prepared to offer the same sort of gift in both of the ways Christ gave it.

It is not only the roses of his martyrs that the Lord cultivates in his garden. There are also the lilies of virgins, the ivy of wedded couples, and the violets of widows. No class of people is justified in despairing, thinking that Christ has not called them. Christ suffered for all. As the Scriptures say, *“God desires that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”*. So let us strive to understand how a Christian must follow Christ—even if without shedding blood for him.

Faith is called to undergo many great tests besides that of a martyr's suffering. The Apostle Paul says of Christ, our Lord: *“Though he was in the form of God he did not consider equality with God something to be clung to”*. He is of unrivalled majesty and yet *“he emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, made in human likeness, and presenting himself in this form”*. This shows us humility and in service to others!

Christ humbled himself. That is what every Christian must do. For instance, *“Christ became obedient”*. How is it that we can be proud? When his experience of humility and service was completed and had conquered death itself, then Christ ascended into heaven. That is where we must follow him. We hear St. Paul tell us, *“If you have been raised with Christ, you must lift your thoughts on high, to where Christ now sits at the right hand of God”*. We are all raised with Christ! We are all called to humble ourselves before our Heavenly Father and one another in service. We are all called to imitate Christ in dying to self and rising to a new self. Everyone can follow Christ in these ways. We are all lowly and poor and needy in God's eyes. God's charity saves, and ours imitates his.

Our Treasure is God Alone

A reflection developed from a letter by St. Clare

Behold the poverty, the humility and the love of Christ. Happy indeed is the one who is granted a place at the divine banquet, who clings wholeheartedly to Christ. His goodness and beauty eternally awe the blessed hosts of Heaven and Christ's love inspires love.

The contemplation of Christ refreshes, his generosity satisfies, and his gentleness delights. The door which brings one into this banquet hall is love. Better, the key to that door is total dependence on divine love. That is what poverty means and why it is ever humble. One who depends totally on another is humble.

The memory of Christ's goodness to us shines as wonderfully as the dawn and evokes a kind of fragrance that can revive even the dead. It is not only in the glorious vision that the citizens of the New Jerusalem rejoice but in the experience of the divine love. You, who are called to be one with Christ, look into the mirror of his eyes that you may see yourself clothed with beauty of mind and body, wholly clad in the most wonderful virtues. You are dressed for the wedding by which you are joined as most chaste spouse to Christ and so to God. Look into the eyes of his love and see the poverty and humility and ineffable love which cloth you with beauty. By God's grace you find in Christ's eyes and life the mirror which you are to contemplate.

Behold first his poverty, even as he was when laid in the manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. Behold his wondrous humility. The King of angels, the Lord of Heaven and Earth rests in a manger! The deeper you look into this mirror the better you will enter into this humility. Then, in the mirror's uttermost depths, ponder his unspeakable love and what it caused him to suffer. The mirror himself, from his position on the cross, warned passersby to weigh his act carefully: "*All you who pass by this way, behold and see if there is any sorrow like mine*". We must answer with all our heart and spirit: "*I will be mindful and remember and my soul will be consumed within me*". In this way your love will burn with an ever brighter flame.

From such love comes the indescribable delight he promises and we sigh for. O Lord, my love, "*draw me on! I follow the sent of your ointment*", o heavenly lover. As you rest in such a state of contemplation, remember me too, your poor mother, and know that I have written your happy memory into my heart. There is no greater treasure than to love our Lord and to give ourselves entirely to love of Him who so loves us. Here we have all that poverty and humility and love are—three names for the same complete gift of self to our Savior and our God.

Putting First Things First

A reflection developed from a sermon by Fr. John Tauler

Our Lord's teaching is that we cannot serve God and mammon; we will inevitably end up thinking little about the one and much about the other. Our Savior bids us set aside all anxiety about things of no permanent importance. He says, for example, "*Can you add a single day to your life by worrying about it*"? We all know how many hidden sins of distrust in providence we commit, not to mention such capital sins as avarice. The hidden sins work more harm among us contemplatives than any others.

In your thoughts and actions do you become over-anxious to succeed in meeting some merely worldly need and forget your neighbor's need for spiritual support? Isn't it strange that we can't persuade ourselves to trust everything to God; he rules absolutely over all things in the heavens and on earth but we don't trust God to care for things like our daily bread! We act as if all depended on our doing some minor task.

Aren't you shocked to think we work so hard for a worldly reason and forget the eternal good of one another, and this even in things pertaining to God's service? This failing is so deep-rooted as to fill every corner of our souls. We are so concerned for things and tasks of this world. Why not trust God, not only outwardly and in words but in all sincerity? God has saved us from so much. God will save us from the disease of worrying about such things? God has given you so much in regard to eternal things. Won't he provide for the petty necessities of this life? We are absorbed in our little jobs, what we wear, our obligations with regard to such things and forget to think of eternal things.

We can barely enter into our own hearts to come before God. If only the petty temporal tasks go well we are content. We are as immersed in small things just as the great of the world are in larger matters! God's justice is found in following Christ's footsteps in poverty of spirit. Let us lay aside all anxiety so that we may find this! God's son has said, "*Whoever tries to save this life shall lose it*". Our way lies in self-denial. This means leaving all that we personally want, outwardly and inwardly. This means seeking God first and putting the things of God in really first place. God grant us this grace!

Mary, the Perfect Christian

A reflection from Mary, Mother of the Lord by Fr. Karl Rahner

What is perfect Christianity? It must consist in receiving the gift which is the eternal God himself and in grace-given freedom. We must receive God with body and soul and with all the powers of our being, with all that we have and all that we do and all that we suffer. This opening of ourselves to God must take up our entire being, our entire life history, and bring all that we are into the eternal life of God. Perfect Christianity means that our public and private acts, including what takes place in the inner depths of our conscience, must perfectly coincide and conform with God's will. What occurs in the depths of our life as Christians must become visible, and what is visible must truly mirror what takes place in the depths of the soul, in God's presence.

Christianity in its perfection means that one's Christian faith serves the salvation of others unconditionally. Our Christianity is only really perfect when we are actually devoted to all all whom God calls from the beginning to the end of time. If that is what perfect Christianity is then we can and must say that Mary is the actual realization of it.

If Christianity in its purest form is the pure acceptance of salvation from the eternal, triune God who has come to us in Jesus Christ, then Mary is the perfect Christian. She is the human person who best exemplifies openness to God—in her faith, in her blessed womb, in her body and soul, in all the powers of her being. She received the eternal Word of the Father in all these ways.

If perfect Christianity is a perfect correspondence between one's outward mission in the history of salvation and one's personal life, this is perfectly realized in Mary. She received visibly and tangibly the Incarnate Word of the Eternal Father and so received the grace of being the most significant person among the merely human beings who show us the way through the visible history of salvation as it works itself out in individual lives. She accepted fully and realized fully a unique office in the economy of redemption and did it with absolutely unconditioned faith. If Christianity is the radiation of the influence of one's own grace in an unselfish service for the salvation of others, Mary is the most perfect instance of what it means to be a Christian. In these ways she shows us our path in faith and love.