

## **TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

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- Sunday**    **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Oct. 2**    **Entrusting Oneself Wholly to God**  
              A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant
- Mon**      **Monday of the Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time**  
**3**            **How God Sows the Mustard Seed of Faith**  
              A reflection taken from a Gospel Commentary of St. Augustine
- Tues**     **Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi**  
**4**            **The Call to Live the Great Commandments**  
              A Letter by St. Francis of Assisi
- Wed**      **Wednesday of the Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time**  
**5**            **The Lord's Reward**  
              A reflection taken from Jesus of Nazareth by Gunther Bornkamm
- Thurs**     **Memory of St. Bruno**  
**6**            **Fleeing to God from the World**  
              An extract from the document called The Eremitical Rule
- Desert Day**  
**Fri**        **Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary**  
**7**            **Accepting our Humanity as God's Gift**  
              A reflection developed from a text by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller
- Sat**        **Saturday of the Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time**  
**8**            **Learning to Believe from God's Providence**  
              An reflection developed from a letter by Fr. Lacordaire
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# **Entrusting Oneself Totally to God**

A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant

At today's Eucharist the Gospel shows us the apostles pleading, "Add to our faith!" To understand what they are asking we need to listen to what Jesus had just said to them. If someone "sins" against you time and again, but each time comes to ask forgiveness, forgive every time! Notice that the offense is called a "sin". It isn't a small matter. Every time you turn around, you find this person trashing you plans to make things better. "Seven times a day" means "all the time".

Yet asking and giving forgiveness is not the whole story. From your point of view, everything is totally out of control! Yet you have to keep forgiving without getting control! Now we see why the apostles felt overwhelmed by Jesus' command. Don't forget that it is a command.

What do the disciples ask for? Jesus' command called for putting self and all one's good intentions and projects wholly in God's hands. You've lost control and you aren't to struggle to get it back; "let go and let God", as they say to addicts in the Twelve Step Program. They ask to be able to do this.

We have already heard the Prophet Habakkuk crying out like the apostles. Everything is going wrong. Yet the plan was to get the entire community of returned exiles worshipping God as they should. Why doesn't God intervene? "My just ones live by faith."

Something similar must have been happening to Timothy because St. Paul gives him a most eloquent exhortation to faith. "Try to trust God as you grandmother and mother did, and as they raised you to do!" We don't need to hear the particulars of Timothy's problem because we have our own. Can you honestly say, "My life is definitely under control and I can be sure that I will achieve what I'm working for!" If you said that you would be lying. The fact is that we can't control all that happens to us, to our community, to those we love and those we work with day after day. Things come up and the best laid plans fall to pieces.

We turn to Jesus! What shall we ask for? Ask for "*pistis*"; i.e., for the Greek word translated in the Gospels as "faith". It means "trust" as much as "faith" and even the part that means "faith" doesn't mean "right belief". To believe here is to give yourself and your life, totally and every day, to God after the example of Jesus. We don't need to accept God's and Jesus' teaching more firmly or completely; after all, accepting Jesus' teaching is what made us feel so overwhelmed. Jesus' compares us to slaves, doing as they're told and feeling like they're doing only the minimum required. What does that mean? It means entrusting your life wholly to God! Put everything into God's hands!

# **How God Sows the Mustard Seed of Faith**

A reflection developed from St. Augustine's Commentary on St. Luke

"If you had faith like a mustard seed...". Reading the Holy Gospel nourishes in us the habit of prayer and so builds up our faith, disposing us to trust in the Lord rather than in ourselves. Recall the parable of the unjust judge. Could there by a more powerful incentive to prayer than this story about untrustworthiness? An unprincipled person without reverence for God or concern for others only does his duty after being worn down by the pestering of a powerless widow. God is not like that, so why does God tell us to pray and to ask?

As Scripture has it, "we ought always to pray and never lose heart". Yet "when the Son of Man comes will he find trust in God upon this earth?" Where there is no prayer there is no trusting faith in God. When we pray it is because we trust that God will answer us. That's why St. Paul proclaims: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!" He adds, "how can people call on one in whom they do not believe?" Do you believe God will answer your prayer?

We have to believe in order to pray and we must ask God in prayer to keep our faith from failing. Trusting faith gives rise to prayer and is strengthened by that very praying. It was when their trust in him was to be supremely tested that the Lord said to his disciples, "Watch and pray that you may not be put to the test". We have to stay awake with the Lord if we don't want to be overcome by temptation. What temptation? To turn one's back on the trust that is faith.

Temptation is harder to resist in proportion to faith's weakening. Recall that before warning the disciples Jesus said, "This night Satan demanded to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you"—and especially for Peter that his faith not fail completely. Should our protector pray if we who need the protection think we have no need to pray?

In asking whether the Son of Man at his second coming will find trusting faith on earth, the Lord was speaking of complete faith. Look at God's church. It is full of people. Would they come if faith were non-existent? But who has the faith that moves mountains? So faith is not present in full measure. The apostles would never have left all they had to follow the Lord if their faith had not been great, yet they cry out to Jesus to add to it. Their faith was not complete and they could not make it complete by themselves. They, and we, have to call out to our Lord: Lord, add to our faith! But will your prayer be answered? Watch how you keep the Lord's commands to love and forgive one another, even when others ruin your plans and projects. You will know if you have accepted God's gift.

# **The Call to Live the Great Commandments**

A Letter by St. Francis of Assisi

To all Christians—to religious, to the ordained, to lay people both men and women, to all who dwell in the entire world, Brother Francis, their servant and subject, offers his respect and reverence, wishing all the true peace of Heaven and sincere charity in the Lord.

As the servant of all, I have an obligation to serve every one, communicating the consoling words of our Lord. Thus, considering that I am unable to visit all due to the weakness and infirmity of my body, I plan to make this letter my messenger and tell you once again of the sayings of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Word of the Father, and I will do this using the words of the Holy Spirit, for they are spirit and life.

God Most High, the Father so holy and great and glorious, announced the coming of the Word through the Archangel Gabriel to the blessed and glorious Virgin Mary. In her womb the Son received the true flesh of our humanity and of our frailty. Rich beyond all others, He was willing to choose poverty along with his ever-blessed Mother.

When his passion was drawing near, he celebrated the Passover with his disciples. Invoking His Father, he uttered this prayer: "My father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass from me". "And his sweat become as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground." Moreover, he resigned his will to the will of the Father, saying: "Father, your will be done; not as I will but as You will." Now this will of the Father was that his blessed and glorious Son, whom he gave to be born for us should offer Himself with his own Blood as sacrifice and victim on the altar of the Cross; not for Himself, by whom all things were made, but for our sins, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps. He wishes us all to be saved by Him and that we should receive him with a pure heart and chaste body. Alas there are very few who receive Him and wish to be saved by Him, although his yoke is sweet and his burden light."

Those who refuse to taste how sweet the Lord is, and prefer darkness to light, not wishing to fulfill the commandments of God, are cursed. It is of such that the Prophet says: "They are cursed who turn away from your commandments." By contrast, how happy and blessed are they who love the Lord and serve Him, as the Lord Jesus himself points out in the Gospel: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart and with your whole soul", and "your neighbor as yourself". Yes, let us love God and let us worship Him with a pure heart and a pure mind. Let us offer Him our prayers and praise day and night. And may the Spirit of the Lord rest on all who shall act thus and persevere to the end. Amen!

# The Lord's Reward

A reflection by Gunther Bornkamm

To those who do God's will Jesus promises a reward. Innumerable sayings and parables contain this idea. But the meaning of this promise has to do with our relationship to God and not with something God gives us.

Our relationship to God is that of a slave. In ancient society a slave was the master's property and a slave's body and life belonged to the master. A slave had no claim on reward. So Jesus tells us to think, "I am just an unprofitable slave; I have done only what I was told to do." The work done is not the slave's and a slave has no choice about doing the task assigned. A slave is required to be faithful in the face of the master's will, no matter how strange.

Yet reward is promised even though we are compared to slaves. It is not, however, a payment which is owed but a mark of distinction such as a trusted and faithful slave might be given. It is a sign of even greater trust. This is shown in the parable of the talents. Those entrusted with the money are slaves. To those who have faithfully done as they were commanded the Master says: "I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master!"

A slave is not paid and dismissed but is received into a closer and more lasting relationship with the master. Before God, the wise and faithful "servant" (since God doesn't actually treat us as slaves) is one who does an assigned task faithfully and well. In the parable the task had to do with the increase in the wealth and property of the master, as that was managed by each servant. This is a parable about our relation with Jesus, and with him our relationship with God.

If we are faithful in our love toward Jesus and our fulfilment of the least of Jesus' commands, if we are constantly ready for action, with our torches alight as waiting for his second coming, then we are promised a reward. But what is that reward. Think of what we are waiting for.

We are not waiting for the nothingness of something totally unknown or unknowable. We are not waiting for the silence of death. We are waiting for the Lord. He is the one who has come to meet even the least of his disciples. It is that Lord who "will gird himself for service and have the faithful ones sit at table, and who will come and serve them". We wait for the Lord who loves us beyond our imagining and for that relation which is the fullness of shared love.

# Fleeing to God from the World

A reflection taken from the Eremitical Rule

Among the many forms of religious life by which we serve the one God, fight for the one King, and seek the one life the solitary life holds the primacy. As David says, “Only one thing have I asked of the Lord, only one thing do I seek: to live in the Lord’s house all the days of my life”.

This is the life that conquers the world, represses the flesh, vanquishes demons, cancels sins, holds vices in check, and exhausts the carnal desires that fight against the soul. This is the life that purifies the mind, illuminates the conscience, cleanses the intellect, gives birth to knowledge, refines the intelligence, follows God, speaks with angels, yearns for heavenly goods, meditates on eternal things—one is accumulating treasures in heaven where rust and moths cannot touch them, where thieves cannot break in and steal.

This is the heavenly woman of wisdom who, being sober, just, and devout in this world, sits as queen at the right hand of God. Clothed in gold, wrapped in a multi-colored garment, robed with the sun of justice, she treads down the moon of worldly glory and savors the things above rather than those of earth. She suffers the pangs of birth because the fruit of holiness does not come to light without the labor of battle. And without the torments of temptation, the fruits of justice—which are charity and joy and peace—cannot come to birth.

The dragon stands before this woman, hoping to devour the fruit of her womb, but the woman flees into the desert. There she is nourished for a time, and times, and a half a time, until the end of the battle. From this it appears most evident that there is no more secure refuge against the ambushes of the ancient serpent, and there is no more valid protection, after God and through God, than the defense that is the solitary life.

You, whoever you are, when you have led the sheep of your simple thoughts and humble feelings into the intimacy of devout purpose, you will see the bush of your humanity become illumined by divine light. You will be glorifying and bearing God in your heart and your body. This is the divine fire that doesn’t burn but enlightens, doesn’t consume but radiates and bestows on faithful ones charismatic gifts. Moses experienced this and afterwards set down the fundamentals for this life, living alone without any human assistance and fasting for forty days so as to receive God’s law. He shows that whoever longs to attain the celestial vision and comply with heavenly discipline must withdraw from human company and mortify the earthly members with hard abstinence. The Savior did the same. He gave us a model of this form of life so we might imitate him.

# **Accepting Our Humanity as God's Gift**

A reflection developed from a text by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller

The Rosary is a product of the popular piety of the middle ages, and was probably popularized by St. Dominic's use of it in preaching against the medieval versions of the teaching that the human body and sexuality in particular are evil and not from God. The Virgin Mary, as is shown us in the Gospel of Luke, is God's chosen instrument for making us see that our humanity with our human body is a saving reality. This was symbolized in pictures and images of Mary with Jesus nursing at her breast.

For almost 2,000 years Christians accepted the belief of ancient non-Christian cultural that the human body is the source of the temptations that lead people to eat and drink too much and to use their sexuality abusively. The body was blamed for all excessive human pleasure seeking. Mary was the counter-symbol that showed the human body can help one draw near to God. To make it a means to holiness one simply has to imitate Mary in giving one's entire self to God to use to save his people.

The "Hail Mary" is made up of quotations from the New Testament about trusting God and is climaxed by a prayer for Mary's intercession "now, and at the hour of our death". We need fear nothing in our humanity if we let God use it as Mary did. What Mary symbolized was realized fully in Jesus, and in his gift of self to the Heavenly Father on the Cross. We enter into this self-giving love when we affirm that God has graced us, as God graced Mary, and is always with us too. We too are given the task of "conceiving" Christ in our own lives by loving and serving others as Jesus loves and serves us.

This is the message of the Feast of the Holy Rosary. It celebrates God's saving love for the Church, symbolized for our ancestors most specially by God's saving them from the military power of the Muslim Turks—first in a naval battle and then in a great land battle in the Balkans. The Rosary became the symbol of God's protection of the faith entrusted to the Christian People.

God protects the Church as an earthly and human (and so bodily) society. When the Church is in danger then most especially all believers need to turn to God in prayer, as Mary did. When some saving deed seems impossible one must confidently place oneself, with the entire Christian Church, in God's hands. Salvation will come! What is necessary is faith and trust. Recall how the disciples once awoke Jesus because their boat was being swamped. What little faith you have! was his reply. Then he calmed the waves and winds. For those who have faith as little as a mustard seed all things are possible. Trust in God; turn to God in prayer; let Mary lead you.

# **Learning to Believe from God's Providence**

A reflection developed from a Letter by Fr. Lacordaire

If we are open to being taught by the Church we will be brought into the heart of that monument of truth and piety that is the Bible. The vision of Jesus Christ fills this holy book and is shown to interweave all great world events. One sees these events as guided by the hand of Providence, and so by the laws of justice and grace. In this light, one can discern that the succession of empires, the rise and fall of great peoples and nations are not masters of chance or fate. Everything takes place under the twofold impulse of human freedom and the wisdom of God. This is the true meaning of history and it should enrapture the Christian.

What a believer is given is an understanding of life that no experience could provide, because experience shows only the human contribution to history whereas the Bible reveals at one and the same time both the divine and the human parts in this story. This revelation not only makes itself felt in the great moments picked out by the Bible but is everywhere in it. God is never absent from God's work! God is in the field with Boaz as he encounters the daughter in law of Naomi, just as God is in Babylon at Belshazzar's feast. God sits by Abraham's tent as a traveler wearied by the journey, just as God dwells on the summit of Mt. Sinai in the thunder proclaiming the Divine Presence. God helps Joseph in prison just as God crowns Daniel in captivity.

The smallest details of family or of the wilderness or of the names, places and events—all are filled with God. In the course of the millennia from humankind's beginning to Calvary, from righteousness lost to righteousness regained, the story that one follows from beginning to end, step by step, is filled with the many movements of Divine Mercy.

Who could remain unmoved by such a pilgrimage through human history? Guided by faith along such a path, who could fail to become a better person by contemplating God's works? The Bible is at one and the same time the drama of our destiny, the philosophy of God's holy people, and the law of those chosen by God and governed by God's love and might. It shows us the preparation and the seed time and the entire future of our race. It is the storehouse of so much truth, and of truth that is so needed! It is the charter of human rights, the treasury of human hopes, the abyss of God's consolations and the kiss of God upon the believer's heart. It is, in the end, Christ, the Son of God, who has saved us and sent us to share that Good News!