

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME



- Sunday** **JOY NEVER ENDING: Foundation of Mepkin Abbey**
Nov. 13 **Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
 Lovers of the Place
 A reflection developed from Lovers of the Place by
 Abbot Francis Kline, OCSO
- Mon** **Monday of the Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time**
14 **The Hopes We Live Toward**
 A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant
- Tues** **Tuesday of the Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time**
15 **Patiently Wait for the Lord**
 A reflection from a letter by St. Nilus of Ankara
- Wed** **Memorial of St. Gertrude the Great**
16 **Some Revelations of St. Gertrude**
 A reflection taken from The Life & Revelations of St. Gertrude
- Thurs** **Thursday of the Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time**
17 **Hope & the Coming of God's Kingdom**
 A reflection from the Gospel of Liberation by Jürgen Moltmann
- Fri** **Friday of the Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time**
18 **The Gift of Perseverance**
 A reflection taken from a homily by St. Macarius of Egypt
- Sat** **Memorial of Our Lady**
19 **Mary's and Our Role in the Work of Salvation**
 A reflection developed from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
 of the Second Vatican Council



Lovers of the Place

A reflection developed from Lovers of the Place by Abbot Francis Kline, OCSO

St. Benedict calls a monastery a school, one that teaches people how to “serve the Lord”. Thus it is a place where we learn love of God in living the gift of self we make in Christ. We love this place, though it makes difficult demands, because in it we find our heart’s deepest desire. To found a new monastery is to create such a place. We celebrate this by sharing what we have learned. We discover that monasticism renews itself by giving its way of life for the Church that gave it birth and now gives it new energy to make the lonely journey that brings us to God.

Part way through life’s journey I found myself standing before a gigantic edifice like nothing I had imagined. I was surrounded by people hurrying this way and that. Among them I saw a young man whose eyes seemed empty of purpose and meaning, and suddenly, I realized I was that young man. A voice said softly: Come in and find life! It was a call to the Church, but where was my place within it?

I saw sorts of groups, looking toward an altar and The Lamb, and everyone was singing. I was singing too. I was being drawn to a very special group called contemplatives. Theirs was a place of rest, yet of ceaseless growth. I realized that I was experiencing a sacrament, a momentary encounter with God in Christ, and it had shown me my place. I had been celebrating a liturgy with all the host of Heaven.

But then I felt a gentle tug—it was time to go back to the world—but with my gaze fixed on God and God’s love. All went to various tasks, trusting Christ and holding fast to one another. We had found our place, until we should be summoned above, we contemplatives. And thus the very idea of “place” had been given new meaning. Our place is where Christ is—our place is His Place and where he is there is our Place. In this place I face my own death and life, and those of others. I must become present to others as Christ is—in a resurrection life and for His sake and the sake of creation and its joy and beauty.

God’s creation is more than I can comprehend but not enough to fill my heart’s desires. There are no short cuts to love and we monks are called to return to the Church what we have been given. In the hall of the Heavenly Liturgy monks call to all who are thirsting for God that in receiving and giving we come together in Christ’s place in the midst of the assembly of his People. The glory of Christ so burns its imprint on monks, that they learn to see that glory wherever Christ is found. This is the Spirit’s charism to monastics given us in this Place of ours.

The Hopes We Live Toward

A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant

We are very close to the end of another liturgical year, another cycle of reflections and celebrations of the hopes we live by. The readings we hear each Sunday at the Eucharist focus attention on the hopes by which our forbearers in faith lived. St. Luke, for instance, emphasizes the sufferings and losses that come with letting go of all we treasure on earth so that we can receive what God intends us to have forever. The more difficult a person's life is the more one may try to hold on to what-ever good things one has. But all is "purged" so that no obstacle will remain to get in the way of what God would give us.

Yet, at the same time, we may not simply sit back and wait for God to give us what we hope for. St. Paul said more than once to the Christians in Thessalonica that our God insists we work to support ourselves and help one another even while letting go of every hope except our hope in God. We have to be detached and yet very much involved! We have to remember to work to realize our short term hopes even while simply trusting in God where the long term hopes are concerned. We have to remember that we face many struggles, as painful as those a woman faces in giving birth, and that the only way to make sense of this is to understand the struggles as preparing us for a new kind of life. Birth to new life comes though suffering!

At least that is our experience and that of our ancestors in faith.

All of us know what it is like to wait for a special event or day. We look forward to graduation from school, to marriage, to religious profession or to ordination, to a job we have been long preparing for, and so on and on. There are so many special days and new opportunities to prepare for, and so heavy a price to pay in preparing to take advantage of them. For thousands of years people have been preparing for the Day of the Lord and we too are still looking forward to it. We long for its good things and joys and we fear the painful preparation that precedes them. Keep watch! Don't let your hope go to sleep! We do know that we will be called to share God's loving and caring, and so we prepare by learning to imitate Jesus way of loving and caring. As Jesus said, "Whoever sees me sees the Father". Our present task is to show one another the same love and care Jesus has shown us. The hope we live by is to be able to be given the grace to do this.

Patiently Wait for the Lord

A reflection from a Letter by St. Nilus of Ankara

In times of trial it is very helpful to patiently endure everything for God's sake. The Lord has told us, "*By patient endurance you will win life*". He didn't say that we will win life by fasting or by solitude and silence, or even by singing psalms. All of these are helpful in saving one's soul. Still, the Lord said we are saved by patient endurance in every sort of trial that comes our way and in every sort of suffering and affliction.

It may be that you will be treated with contempt or caused to fall into disgrace—whether in a great or small way, or that you will suffer bodily weakness or have to face the violent attacks of Satan through temptations or other trials, and such things may be caused by other people or demons or we may bring them upon ourselves. No matter what happens, the Lord says that it is by patient endurance that we will save our lives.

By patient endurance you will win life. Of course, it must be added that whole hearted thanksgiving has to accompany patient endurance, and we must never stop praying or seeking humility. We must be ready to bless and praise our God and benefactor always. God is the savior of the world and God disposes all things for our benefit, whether than by good or bad taken singly. So St. Paul too writes, "*With patient endurance we run the race of faith that is set before us*". What has greater power than the virtue of faith? What is solid or stronger than patient endurance—at least if it is endurance for God's sake? Faith is the queen of all virtues and is accompanied always by patient endurance. Thus it serves as the foundation for all other virtues.

It is also a haven of tranquility. It gives us peace in times of war and calm when the waters of life are rough. It brings us to safety in spite of treachery and danger. It makes those who practice it stronger than steel. No weapon, no formation of troops, no engines of war or spear or arrow can shake it. Even the hosts of evil spirits and the powers of darkness, even the devil himself and all his forces and devices, have no power to injure those who have faith and know how to endure with patience. This is God's daily gift. Let us walk by the light and strength given us that we may come to our God.

Some “Revelations” of St. Gertrude

A reflection taken from The Life & Revelations of St. Gertrude

St. Gertrude’s “revelations” are insights that came to her as she prayed at Mass or the Divine Office and shared with her sisters. Thus, as all prayed the antiphon, “*Whoever would imitate me, let that person take up the cross and follow me.*” She saw our Lord walking down a path that seemed pleasant because of its fine grass and flowers but which was narrow and rough with thorns. A cross went before the Lord and pushed aside the thorns so as to widen the path, and the Savior turned to those who followed, looked at them with love, and said, “Let those who would come after me take up the cross, deny themselves and follow me”. Hearing this she realized temptations are our crosses and that it may be a cross to one to be governed by obedience or to have to do what one doesn’t like or to practice self-restraint. Each should carry such a cross with a heart willing to suffer all that “crosses” one yet while neglecting nothing that seems to be to the glory of God.

Chanting the verse “*The words of the wicked have overpowered us*”, Gertrude realized that if one sins through human frailty and is too severely corrected, the excessive severity itself draws down upon the sinner God’s mercy. Again, changing the “Hail Holy Queen” while praying to be healed of a bodily infirmity, she heard the Lord say, “Don’t you know that I look on you with eyes of mercy when you suffer anything in body or mind?” And when singing the response to the reading on the feast of a martyr, she realized charity and obedience are like blood shed for Jesus and so are rightly described as glorious. One should be aware that correction sometimes hardens people in their sin and that charity is needed.

When all sang the response that speaks of God’s blessing to Noah and his sons, Gertrude realized that when we turn to God, even after falling into a serious fault, the grace of Christ so sustains one as to lead one to rapid repentance and that we bless God when we repent and when we ask for help to avoid sin in the future.

The Lord demands an account from every vowed person for the sins a “neighbor” commits and which might have been prevented by a warning or by bringing a problem to the attention of the superior. One can’t be excused by thinking it isn’t one’s place any more than Cain was by asking, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Each is obliged by God to help a neighbor turn from sin and advance in virtue. To neglect it is to offend God. We are guilty if we say and do nothing when we might glorify God by bringing the evil to light.

Hope and the Coming of God's Kingdom

A reflection from *The Gospel of Liberation* by Jürgen Moltmann

Some were talking about the Temple, and Jesus said, "*All these things you are staring at now, the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another, everything will be destroyed*". What are we to be concerned about? First, about the future Kingdom of God with the fulfillment of our hopes and prayers, and second about the future of the earth on which we work and love and suffer with others. We recognize that many bad things are coming but we long for peace and righteousness on earth so that our children may be happy and live with all others in a human way.

Daily we read the Bible and listen to the news. The first causes us to want to be part of the history of God's coming and the second leads us to want to be part of the fate of our world. How can we bring together the community of hope in God and the community of shared sorrows that is our world? The Bible tells us that those who persevere in hope also abide in love. We hope in Christ and so don't allow ourselves to be embittered by disappointments of any kind. We persevere in loving the degraded and wronged with Jesus and we bring friendliness into a world filled with indifference. We are "fools for the love of Christ". We always trust.

To persevere to the end means going ahead with the message of freedom so that the Kingdom will penetrate everywhere and in all circumstances with the conviction that the last word will be the Kingdom of Christ. Persevering to the end means going to meet the coming of God. We don't fight for a point of view but against the real suffering of the actual world and we do it with Gospel hope. It is only when the gospel of the Kingdom is preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to the nations that the "end" will come.

Will it be the end of the world's needs? Notice that this "end" doesn't come until after wars, catastrophes, famines and the rest. Those things are not the "end", they haven't the last word. Christian hope is not about destruction but a witness that the end will be God's love and goodness. It is a witness to what can be hoped for. Christian hope is a hope for the love that takes upon itself the sorrow of humanity and looks forward to a time when peace and joy will laugh together. Christ is coming as the judge who comforts all the afflicted and raises the suffering oppressed to freedom. We proclaim this each day by our words and lives and love of all who are in need of Christ.

The Gift of Perseverance

A reflection taken from a Homily by St. Macarius of Egypt

There are people who struggle with Satan and endure affliction. They have contrite hearts and they mourn and weep in their anxiety. If they persevere in this struggle the Lord is with them and protects them. They are earnest in seeking and knocking at the door until the Lord opens to them. If you run into such good people, know that they are sustained by grace.

On the other hand, some people lack a grace-given foundation. They have no proper fear of God. They are undisciplined, their hearts aren't contrite, they are not afraid, and they don't keep watch over them-selves. If they continue in lack of self-control, such people can't even enter the struggle.

While the first mentioned group is at war and putting up with affliction, the second group doesn't even know what it means to endure afflictions. They don't know frost and cold and so can't hope rightly to receive new life that spring brings.

It may happen that Satan will say in your heart, "See how many wrongs you have committed, how full of obsessive passions you are, how weighed down you are by sin; you can't any longer hope to be saved! Satan does this to reduce you to despair and make you think that your repentance hasn't been accepted.

Ever since sin entered the human heart it has argued with us minute after minute as one person does with another. Your reply must be, "I have the Lord's promise in Scripture; he says 'I don't desire the death of sinners but their repentance, so that they turn from their wickedness and live'."

But the Lord came to earth to save sinners, to raise the dead, to bring life to those who were lost in sin, and to give light to those living in darkness. By his coming he called us to adoption as God's children, to the holy city which is ever at peace and to a life that has no end. But we must bring this beginning to a good end.

We must persevere in poverty. We must regard ourselves as exiles. We must continue in prayer and mortification. We must knock on the Lord's door with shameless persistence. The Lord is nearer to each of us than we are to our very selves and is ready to open all locked doors in our hearts and give us all heaven's riches. His promise cannot deceive—if only we persevere to the end in seeking Him.

Mary's Role in the Work of Our Salvation

A reflection developed from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council

The Father of Mercies willed that the incarnation should be preceded by the acceptance of the one who was predestined to be the mother of the Son. This was so that just as a woman led us to death, so likewise a woman should lead us back to life. This is what happened in such a marvelous way in Mary, the mother of Jesus. She gave Him to the world who is life itself and who renews everything. He was enriched by God with the gifts that are fitting for this role he played.

It is no wonder, then, that the usage prevailed among the Fathers whereby Mary was called Mother of God and was recognized as entirely holy and free from all stain of sin. She was fashioned by the Holy Spirit as a new creature. Adorned from the first instant of her conception with the radiance of an entirely unique holiness, the Virgin of Nazareth is greeted by an angel at God's command and declared "full of grace".

To the Heavenly messenger she replies: Behold, the slave girl of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your command. Thus Mary, a daughter of Adam, consenting to the Divine Word, became the mother of Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Embracing God's salvific will with her full heart and without any impediment due to sin, she dedicated herself totally to the task given her by her Lord without any impediment due to sin and took upon herself the work of supporting the person and work of her Son. She labored with him and under him, by the grace of almighty God, in service of the mystery of redemption.

It was only right that the Holy Fathers of the Church saw her as used by God not in a merely passive way but as a free cooperator in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. As St. Irenaeus says, "being obedient, she became the cause of salvation not simply for herself but for the entire human race". As not a few of the Fathers assert in their preaching, "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; what the virgin Eve imprisoned though her unbelief was freed by the Virgin Mary's faith". Comparing her with Eve they call her "mother of the living". Even more frequently they assert that "death came through Eve but life through Mary".

We too are called to free and whole-hearted service of God's plan of redemption. We do this in doing the tasks of each day out of love for God revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Like Mary, let us persevere to the end.