

EIGHTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. **THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**
Aug. 5 **TRUSTING IN THE LIVING BREAD**
 A reflection by Bishop Theophylact
- Mon. **THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION**
6 **PASSING FROM GLORY TO GLORY**
 A reflection from a homily by St. John Damascene
- Tues. **Tuesday in the 18th Week of Ordinary Time**
7 **ENTERING THE MYSTERY OF COMMITTED LOVE**
 From The Wellspring of Worship by Fr. Jean Carbon, OP
- Wed. **The Memorial of St. Dominic**
8 **PAYER AND AN APOSTOLIC LIFE**
 A reflection by Fr. Bede Jarrett, OP
- Thurs. **The Memorial of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross**
9 **GIVING ONE'S LIFE IN SOLITARITY WITH GOD'S LOVE**
 A reflection developed from the words of St. Teresa Benedicta
- Fri. **MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
10 **Feast of St. Lawrence the Deacon**
 THE DEDICATION OF A DEACON TO GOD'S POOR
 A narrative by St. Peter Chrysologus
- Sat. **The Memorial of St. Clare**
11 **DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITIES GOD OFFERS YOU**
 A reflection from a letter by St. Clare

TRUSTING IN THE LIVING BREAD

A reflection by Bishop Theophylact

Scripture tells us; *“Our ancestors ate manna in the desert; God gave them bread from heaven to eat”*. When the Lord Jesus performed a miracle by multiplying bread did those who ate think only of earthly hunger or did they see what he did as a sign that God is always ready to satisfy our spiritual hunger? Jesus makes the contrast clear by telling those who came to him, *“it wasn’t Moses who give you bread”* but God did. What’s more Moses couldn’t give the true bread but could only represent this gift symbolically by the manna. The true giver was God and the true bread was, and is, Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us that he is the true bread come down from heaven, and it is “true” bread because it gives “true” life; i.e., a life that lasts forever.

The bread that is the Son of the living Heavenly Father is life by its very nature. Thus, it gives life to all who eat it with true faith. Just as earthly bread sustains the frail substance of the flesh and prevents it from decaying, so Christ gives the soul life through the power of the Spirit. He also preserves even the body for immortality. Through Christ’s resurrection from the dead and through bodily immortality, everything pertaining to life is given freely to the human race.

We read in the Gospel: *“Jesus said to the people: “I am the bread of life and whoever comes to me will never hunger and whoever believes in me will never thirst”*. He didn’t say he gave a bread for bodily nourishment and nothing more, but that he gave “the bread of life”. When everything had been reduced to a condition describable only as “spiritual death” then the Lord gave life through himself. He is bread because, as we believe, the leaven in the dough that is our humanity was baked through and through by the fire of his divinity.

Christ gives us the bread not of ordinary life but of a very different kind of life. Death can never cut short this kind of life. Whoever believe in the true bread that is Christ will never hunger and never be famished. What sort of hunger is he speaking of? It is a hunger for hearing God’s word. Christ is the Word of God and one who eats him can’t lack God’s Word. Nor can such a person be parched by spiritual thirst. One is given to drink of the Spirit through the waters of baptism. One is thereby consecrated by the Spirit.

Compare your condition to that of an unbaptized person. Such a one lacks the refreshment given by the sacred waters. Such a one suffers great spiritual aridity. But we who are baptized and have been possessed by the Spirit can be sure of being given continually all that is needed for spiritual consolation. You have only to ask. God has promised you all things by choosing you and then gifting you with his Christ and his Spirit. What would God withhold from you? You have only to ask in prayer for what you truly need.

Never allow the gift of prayer to fade within you. Pray daily. Pray continually. Pray with Jesus. You will have all you need. But you have to trust that what God has given you meets the needs you truly have. Trust God to know what you need and give that to you in love.

PASSING FROM GLORY TO GLORY

A reflection that from a homily by St. John Damascene

When Jesus took three disciples up the holy mountain he was transfigured. They were amazed but not terrified. But then “a bright cloud overshadowed them” and they fell on their faces in terror because within that cloud they sensed the presence of God in a way they never had before.

When Moses saw God on Mt. Horeb God was revealed in a kind of darkness. In the same way, when one accepted the Law one had to live in a kind of darkness because one couldn't see clearly the face of God in it. Israel could see only a passing glory in the face of Moses, because even in darkness God transforms those who come and worship.

We who have been called by Christ behold the glory of the Lord in a way that is not hidden by a veil, as was the glory reflected from Moses' face. St. Paul tells us that we are being transformed by God's presence from one degree of glory to another. The cloud that overshadowed the disciples wasn't one of darkness but of light. The mystery hidden from the ages is revealed to them with a new glory. God has revealed the Divine Face in a human face. On the holy mountain a few disciples beheld the glory that lives in us as we are made one with Jesus.

A mystery hidden for ages, the fact that God comes in human faces, is now revealed. Moses and Elijah so testify. They proclaim the hope now fulfilled in such an unexpected way in Jesus. A voice from the cloud said: “*This is my beloved Son*”. God is seen in human form. Christ lives in the midst of us every day. Just as the Son precedes proceeds timelessly and eternally from the Heavenly Father, a Father who didn't begin to exist because of the Son, but is with the Father from all eternity, so now the Son comes continually in time and in human faces. It is a new revelation of glory to see the Son in ourselves and so see the glory that is really in us. This was what was seen indirectly in the face of Christ glorified. Our glory is beginning to be revealed and it is God's glory.

It was by the Father's good pleasure that the only Son, the Word, became incarnate. It was by the Father's good pleasure that the salvation of the world be achieved through the only begotten Son become human. It was the Father's good pleasure that brought about the union of the whole universe through the only begotten Son. Humanity is a microcosm linking all things visible and invisible together by sharing in the nature of both sorts of things in Christ. This is what Scripture means in telling us that through Christ “*God is all in all*”. In Christ we see ourselves and our call as steward of all creation.

This is my beloved Son, says the Heavenly Father. This is the radiance of my glory. This one bears the stamp of my own nature. Through the Son I created angels and all bodily things. Through the Son all things are made firm. The Son upholds the universe. The Son does this by his word and by the life-giving and guiding Spirit. We see all this in ourselves and so we see yet more clearly God's glory and how we share in it. The Heavenly Father says: “*Listen to Him!*” Whoever receives the Son receives the Father who sent him and by whose authority He speaks. He makes us words of life for all. Reveal this glory in your words and deeds.

ENTERING THE MYSTERY OF COMMITTED LOVE

A reflection from The Wellspring of Worship by Fr. Jean Carbon, OP

One day is not long enough to enter fully into the mystery that the Incomprehensible One has shown. It is endless but elusive beauty to us seen in the transfigured Christ. Note first that the change is not in Christ but in us. Our eyes were opened because we had been blind. Note second that what we are asked to contemplate is Jesus' committed love. That is what he is speaking about with Moses and Elijah.

The purpose of Jesus' transfiguration is the salvation of human persons. As in the burning bush, so here God allows the light that is Divinity to be seen by bodily eyes. The objective is not to communicate knowledge but to share with us life, and the salvation which realizes this life fully. Christ reveals himself as one who gives self wholly to the Heavenly Father, who has given him everything! Christ reveals self as one who gives everything back to the Father from whom he received himself. That is our call as well. Answering it is our salvation.

Now that we have entered upon this holy ground let's take off the sandals of mere human curiosity so that we can enter more deeply into the mystery. It is a mystery of self-giving. A few days before the transfiguration Peter had received an interior enlightenment and had acknowledged Jesus as the Christ of God. All the disciples shared this knowledge and so Jesus began to reveal to them the truth that he had to suffer, to be put to death, and to be raised from the dead. But no one, Peter included, saw how to put together the revelation of his true nature and the passion and death to come.

It was between the revelation given to Peter and the further revelation of his passion that Jesus ascended the mountain and led three disciples to a fuller revelation of the link between passion and glory in the lives of those who love the Heavenly Father with all their heart. Jesus instructs his disciples concerning his passion and resurrection but they don't actually understand what this concretely means. Jesus shows the disciples that giving his whole being to the Father means entering into the suffering that comes from living out this gift. With all himself he is committed to the loving will of the Father, including the truth that Gethsemane and on the Cross.

We must enter into the mystery of committed love, and that means a love as committed as was that of Jesus. The transfiguration on the mountain was an opening of our eyes to the intensity of such giving. That is what becomes transparent and is glimpsed as glory. That radiance is to shine through us as well. Then we can understand the words: "*This is my beloved, who has my favor!*" When we hear this said of us we know that we have given everything to God. When others can "see" this gift they can see the glory that God has chosen to give us. Then we will also grasp why our God says, not only of Jesus but of us, "*Listen to this person!*" Listen to the witness of committed love. Our transformation in God will transform the world.

PRAYER IN AN APOSTOLIC WAY OF LIFE

A reflection by Fr. Bede Jarrett, OP

It surprises some to know that St. Dominic calls for his followers to pray the full cycle of the chanted Divine Office. It is, of course, a fact that Dominic was a great lover of liturgical prayer, and not just because he began his life with God as a canon. Dominic's biographers tell us repeatedly of his ways of practicing devotion, as it was then called. He sang his morning mass whenever that was possible and arranged his trips so he could stay at certain priories where he knew the liturgy was celebrated devoutly and well. We read about his practice of the devotion of repeated genuflections before the crucifix and repeated prostrations before the Blessed Sacrament. Bowing, kneeling, standing and every other bodily posture were part of the proper way to address God. He thought of worship as claiming the whole of a person body and spirit.

He loved what he thought of as serried ranks of prayers chanting the Office and has his own choir stall in Dominican priories. He thought this should be made more impressive by various gestures. He is described as leaving his own stall to pass up and down the ranks of the brothers exhorting them to sing more strongly (*fortiter*). He looked upon all this as having a positive, formative effect on those assigned to apostolic work. It was a way of making people conscious that they weren't alone in a huge undertaking and that a force of praying religious stood behind them. He thought of his success as *preachers* as depending on the power of prayer rather than that of rhetoric or logic in arguing. He saw this mutual support as parallel to that of the ranks of angels standing in perpetual prayer before God's throne.

Dominic was concerned lest his brethren see their own choice of their superior in a way that diminished the person's authority. He was also concerned lest studies should develop a kind of critical spirit that could undermine reverence for tradition. To avert such dangers and avoid what he thought of as mere small talk he emphasized the practice and attitudes encouraged by choral prayer. When chanted in a measured way the Office makes one think and feel in a more decorous and grave way.

More important yet, the Office gives one opportunities for a prolonged contemplation of the mysteries of faith and the word of God generally. That means it provides one with a daily sustenance for the spiritual life. In his time lesser importance was given to retreats and private devotions than to the choral praying of the office. Dominic thought of the first need of his followers as spiritual and he saw the Divine Office as the primary and most effective way of nourishing the spirit in Christians. That is no less true today than in the time of St. Dominic's life and apostolic preaching. We must not underestimate the practical importance of praying the Divine Office and doing so in a serious and decorous way. Leading people to pray the Office, and pray it as Dominic did, is a major factor in the Christian apostolate to the world.

GIVING ONE'S LIFE IN SOLIDARITY WITH GOD'S LOVE

A reflection developed from the words of St. Teresa Benedicta

Edith Stein was born a member of an observant Jewish family and as a graduate student in philosophy was assistant to another Jew, Edmund Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology as a philosophical method. Yet Edith lost her family's faith as she grew up and then found Christian faith through reading the works of St. Teresa of Avila. She sensed a vocation to contemplative life and entered the Carmelite convent of Our Lady of Peace (in Cologne) in 1933. She had been a teacher and continued this as a Carmelite.

Because of the anti-Semitic laws of the Nazi's Edith, together with a younger sister for whom she cared, were sent to the community in Echt, Holand. But, after the conquest of the country, the Dutch bishops issued a pastoral letter that condemned Nazism and its anti-Semitism. In retaliation all converted Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

Sr. Teresa Benedicta added the phrase "of the Cross" to her name and had prepared for what the Nazis inflicted on her by special fasting and self-privation for living in concentration camp conditions. She also wrote a kind of spiritual will. *"I beg the Lord to accept my life and my death for the sake of the Holy Church and our order, especially in Cologne and Echt. I offer this as atonement for the unbelief of the Jewish People and that they will receive the Lord and that his Kingdom may come in glory. I offer it for the salvation of Germany and the peace of the world, and for my loved ones living or dead and for all those that God gave to me. May none of them go astray."*

She had long believed that she would not survive the war and so asked her prioress for permission to offer herself to the heart of Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement in the cause of peace. The arrest of all converted Jews was ordered in July of 1942 and Sr. Teresa Benedicta and her sister were sent successively to two concentration camps. A Dutch official involved in processing her papers was so impressed by her that he offered to arrange an escape. *"If someone intervened at this point and took away my chance to share in the fate of my brothers and sisters (Jews) I would see that as utter annihilation."* She was determined to offer herself in solidarity with God's loving intention for his chosen Jewish people. She thought this was God's will in her regard.

She and her sister were deported to Auschwitz on August 7th and the two of them probably died together in a mass gas chamber on August 9th. She was beatified as a martyr in 1987 and declared a saint in 1998. She is now one of the six patron saints of Europe. Many schools have been named after her and there is a society dedicated to the study of her philosophical works, as well as books and a play about her. She wrote several studies on women's issues in the face of Nazi attitudes toward women. Since she died as the result of a pastoral letter her death is considered a witness to Christian faith as well as solidarity with her people. She viewed herself as sent by God to witness to God's love for the Chosen People. We are all given opportunities by our way of life to live and die as witnesses to God's love.

THE DEDICATION OF A DEACON TO GOD'S POOR

A narrative composed by St. Peter Chrysologus

Lawrence was an archdeacon of the church of Rome and very close to Pope Sixtus II, his bishop. When Sixtus was condemned to death Lawrence followed him as closely as he could to the place of his execution. We are told that Sixtus looked back and saw Lawrence's sadness. Interpreting it as sorrow that he too would not receive the gift of martyrdom the bishop said, "*Do not be said, my son; in three days you will follow me.*" This prophecy delighted Lawrence and he began to prepare himself inwardly. In fact, he was almost immediately arrested, and since he was an archdeacon, and so was presumed to have access to the church's treasures, he was commanded to turn them over. The holy Lawrence was actually poor in the sort of wealth the persecutor wanted but he was rich in virtue and responded by asking for three days to get everything together. Three days later he came to his judge accompanied by great crowds of poor people whom the church had aided. "*These are the riches of the church!*", Lawrence proclaimed.

He spoke only the truth, but it made his death more bitter, at least in his judge's eyes. Enraged at being made to look ridiculous the judge, who might have come up with a less severe penalty, ordered Lawrence to be killed by torture. He himself was aflame with an inner fire and so he brought forward the well-known gridiron for martyring Lawrence by roasting him and so dehydrating him. Only after that would he be decapitated as the law required. Lawrence, however, insisted on treating the gridiron as a bed of rest. It was torture in the mind of the judge but not according to the victim's outlook.

Where no penalty for sin is involved no torture is really such. So the most blessed martyr, showing how peacefully he rested on red hot iron, told the bystanders: "*Turn me over now. If one side is done you can begin to eat.*"

We admire Lawrence's endurance. We have to admire it as a gift of God. In this case, the victim's faith was not burning him painfully but was consoling him as he was roasted. How did faith console him? It did this by keeping him faithful to the One who has promised all eternal life in return for believing trust. That his faith might not fail God bestowed on the martyr a horde of gifts. His hope burned more brightly than the fire kindled by his executioners. Indeed, his charity was enkindled all the more amid the bodily punishment that is fire. He is a supreme example to us of how to follow Christ to the cross when that is God's will. There is always a way to turn every difficulty into an opportunity to love God and God's People.

DON'T LOSE THE OPPORTUNITIES GOD GIVES

A reflection developed from a letter by St. Clare

Every day look in your spiritual mirror and reflect on how you might make yourself more beautiful in the eyes of Christ, our lover. In this mirror, by the grace of God, you want to see blessed poverty, holy humility and love beyond the power of words to describe.

You will behold the poverty of one who was laid in a manger and wrapped in very ordinary swaddling clothes. Not only was he poor but what wonderful humility he shows us. The King of Angels, the Lord of heaven and earth is laid in that manger. Then think of the countless difficulties and labors that he accepted as the price for the redemption of our race. In both of these marvelous realities we see the ineffable love which made him willing to die a horrible and shameful death on the cross.

When this sort of mirror is hung on the wood of the cross itself it seems to speak to us, to all of us: *“All you who pass by, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering!”* This is how he calls us to follow him. Can we reply in the traditional words? *“I recall it Lord, over and over again, and it puts joy into my downcast soul”*. If we do things like this we will glow with greater and greater love for God and for Jesus.

Besides, as you meditate on the indescribable delights and riches and enduring honors Jesus offers us, and you in particular, and as you sigh and long with all your heart, try to cry out to Jesus with your love: *“Draw me! We will follow you eagerly, Oh Heavenly Bridegroom!”*

Yes, let us run and never grow weary till Jesus brings us into the banquet hall of Heaven. Then his left hand will be under my head and his right will embrace me and he will kiss me in loving welcome.

As you meditate in this way, please remember me. I think of you all and have inscribed you on the tablets of my heart and in happy memories. Let us all be so dear to one another. Happy are all who are given the grace of sharing such a holy way of life as is ours. The angelic court of Heaven never ceases to admire the beauty of this way of life. Love for it is love for Jesus. It exhilarates us merely to reflect on such realities and this brings ever new insights. It is so wonderful that it even brings life to the dead. With all the citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom let us rejoice in it. This is indeed the spiritual mirror in which we glimpse ourselves as God is making us to be that we may share everything with God and with each other forever.