

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

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- Sun. **Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
Sept. 16 **WHAT WE HAVE TO DO IS FOLLOW CHRIST**  
A reflection by St Caesarius of Arles
- Mon. **Monday of the 24<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
17 **HOW JESUS SHOWS US OURSELVES**  
A reflection from a text by Paul Tillich
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 24<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
18 **WHAT WILL PERSUADE YOU TO FOLLOW CHRIST?**  
A reflection from a text by St. Cyril of Alexandria
- Wed. **Wednesday of the 24<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
19 **HOW MUCH DOES GOD LOVE YOU?**  
A reflection from a homily by St. Gregory Palamas
- Thurs. **Memorial of Sts. Andrew Kim & Paul Chong, Martyrs**  
20 **HOLDING FAST TO CHRIST'S GIFT OF FAITH**  
A letter of encouragement by St. Andrew Kim Taegon
- Fri. **Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle & Evangelist**  
21 **WHAT WE GAIN IN GIVING ALL TO CHRIST**  
A reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman
- Sat. **Memorial of our Lady**  
22 **WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM MARY, OUR MOTHER?**  
A reflection developed from a text by Fr. Karl Rahner

# **WHAT WE HAVE TO DO TO FOLLOW CHRIST**

**A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Caesarius of Arles**

The Lord tells us that whoever wants to be Christ's follower must renounce self. Does this command sound harsh to you? Do you think the Lord is imposing a burden on us? But pause and ask: Where do we have to go to follow Christ? We have to go where he has gone? He has gone to Heaven. He rose and ascended to the Heavenly Father. Do you think it is a burden to follow the Lord to Heaven?

Ordinarily, an order isn't a real burden when the one who gives it helps you fulfill it. How much more when Jesus is with us to help us follow him to Heaven. If left to ourselves we couldn't do anything. But we have Christ promise to be with us. There is no reason to despair; he is with us!

Heaven was beyond our reach before the Head of the body, whose members we are, went there. If we are member of Christ then we will surely get to Heaven. Is there any reason to lose hope? Many are afraid of afflictions and trials that confront us in this world. But if we follow Christ we will end up in a place of perfect happiness, perfect peace, and everlasting freedom from all fear. Let's look at Christ's command in terms of our own anxieties. St. Paul reminds us that "one who claims to abide in Christ ought to walk as Christ walked". Now human sin made the path to heaven rough but when Christ himself walked it he transformed the narrowest of tracks into a royal highway. You need two feet!

The first foot is humility. If you want to follow Christ be humble as he was. Don't despise his lowliness or fear it. Everyone wants to get to the top. Good, the first step is humility. Why try to take strides that are too big for you? Do you want to fall flat on your face instead of climbing higher? Lowliness and humility are steps to exaltation. Begin with humility and you have already begun to climb.

The second foot is charity. Perhaps that seems very difficult because it involves renouncing self and taking up our cross. What does it mean to take up one's cross? It means bearing every annoyance patiently. If you begin to follow Christ's way of life and God's commandments some will resist you or mock you or even persecute you. They may be people who claim to be Christians, but are that only in name. Nevertheless, you need not be afraid. When one learns patience, one learns how to endure trials without being overwhelmed by them.

You want to follow Christ. Good, then take up the cross without delay. Endure injuries without being overcome by them. The first thing to remember is a word of St. Paul's: "As long as we have food and clothing, let this be enough for us". One who seeks all kinds of property or much wealth or wants to be rich will have to face many temptations. Many such things are actually useless or even harmful. We flee from such temptations by loving the Lord more and more. We have enough if we have Christ. Loving Christ is the charity that teams up with humility to enable us to run the way of God's commandments, as Jesus did. Remember Jesus' word to Martha: "*Only one thing is necessary!*" That one thing is God revealed to us in Jesus. If we have Jesus we have God, and if we have God we have everything we truly need.

# **HOW JESUS SHOWS US OURSELVES**

**A reflection from a text by Paul Tillich**

**On the road with the disciples Jesus asked: Who do people say I am? People thought that Jesus must be a kind of mask for some hidden reality. He was special; was he one of the prophets of the past or the recently martyred John the Baptist? But Jesus was interested in what the disciples thought personally. Peter spoke up: You are the Christ. In these words, he expressed something entirely different than ordinary people understood. He asserted that the decisive point in history had come and that the Christ, the bearer of the new, had come in this man Jesus, who was walking with them along a dusty village road in the north of Palestine.**

**When Peter called Jesus the Christ, the word 'Christ' designated him who was to bring the liberation of Israel, the victory of God over the nations, transformation of the human heart, and the establishment of the messianic reign of peace and justice. Through the Christ, history would be fulfilled; God would become the Lord of all mankind and the earth would be changed into a place of blessedness. All this was implied in Peter's words, "You are the Christ".**

**Both the greatness and the tragedy of the moment in which Peter uttered these words are visible in Jesus' reaction. He prohibited the disciples to discuss who he is with people. The messianic character of Jesus was a mystery. It didn't mean to him what it meant to the people in general. He proceeded to teach the disciples that the Son of Man would endure much suffering, be rejected, be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke of this quite freely.**

**Peter shows us how the disciples and people in general would react. The moment in which Peter called him the Christ, Jesus prophesied his suffering and death. He began to reveal the mystery of his messianic destiny. Jesus didn't deny his messianic vocation. In the symbolic utterance containing the phrase "rising after three days" he indicated that his rejection and his death would not be a defeat, but necessary steps to fulfilling his messianic vocation. He was the Christ only as the suffering and dying Christ.**

**Those who try to avoid the cross as the way, and those who hope for a Christ while rejecting a crucified Christ, have no knowledge of the mystery of God's relationship with human kind. Some think of Jesus as only a forerunner and expect another with yet greater power to transform the world or greater wisdom to change our hearts.**

**Even the greatest in power and wisdom could, however, not reveal more fully the heart of God and the heart of human beings than the Crucified has already done. Of Jesus alone can we say: He is the new reality! He is the fulfillment! He is the Messiah! It is only to the Crucified One that we can say: You are the Christ. We must say it in our deeds as well as our words. We are called to be crucified along with Jesus. We don't know ourselves until we experience ourselves as living this reality with Jesus.**

## **WHAT WILL PERSUADE YOU TO FOLLOW CHRIST?**

**A reflection from a Scripture Commentary by St. Cyril of Alexandria**

Exhortations are usually given in two forms. One either speaks of the bad things that await those inclined to be careless about their behavior, so as to frighten them into changing it and win them over to a life of doing good, or one instructs people about the rewards prepared for the just and how to obtain them.

To judge by Scripture this is how the Lord of Heavenly good has always approached us. In both instances what is sought is a better life, a life of virtue. That means the life of a truly good and even excellent human person—one like Jesus. If we do this we receive all the rewards prepared for the just.

The God of all creation is threatening those who go astray and pointing out that wars, disasters, exile from one's family and friends, the ruin of cities and brutal treatment come from injustice and refusal to imitate Jesus. But God doesn't stop there.

We are told to give up useless things that bring only such misery as we have just described, and choose instead what really helps people. We should be like good tillers of the soil. We should sow justice and so reap the fruit that is a good life.

As St. Paul wrote: "*Whatever we sow we shall also reap*". Another Scripture adds: "*Those who sow evil will reap evil.*" On the other hand, the just will have salvation and life in fullest measure; they will be illustrious and worthy of imitation. They will gather the grapes from which come the wine that gladdens the human heart.

Besides all this, those who want to receive the light of true knowledge and to win God's approval must open themselves mind and heart to receive what God alone can give. This is the love given in Jesus Christ. That is what is lacking to those who worship creation, and especially their own creations, rather than the Creator of all.

How we can best go about sowing justice and reaping the fruit of life and receiving the bright light of knowledge as told us by the prophets? "*Seek the Lord until the fruits of justice come to you!*"

There is no special place where we have to seek God. That would be a foolish idea. God is not contained in any space or time. God is to be sought by the dispositions within us.

This is a matter of eagerness of mind and heart. It is a matter of turning toward God and whatever pleases God. It is a matter of reverencing true and clear knowledge of what is good and perfect and brings no censure. When we have found God in this way we are rich in all that really counts.

In God we find every blessing there is. Seek God with all your heart and mind and strength and do it today and every day of your life.

# **HOW MUCH DOES GOD LOVE YOU?**

**A reflection taken from a homily by St. Gregory Palamas**

**Before we were created our Maker brought the whole universe into being from nothing. He did this that we might exist and find sustenance for our living and working. But we did not want to conduct ourselves as God asked us to. What did God do? What has God not done that would enable us to live rightly and well or that would guide us to virtue and genuine excellence as human persons? What could love and goodness do beyond what our God has done for us?**

**God has made the entire perceptible universe as a kind of mirror to show us heaven. By the spiritual contemplation of the world around us we can reach upward to heavenly things. It is as if the perceptible world were a wonderful ladder to bring us to all goodness and blessing.**

**God implanted in us the natural law. It is an inflexible rule, and infallible judge and an unerring teacher. This is all in our conscience. If we look deep within ourselves we need no other teacher to show us what is good. If we look outside ourselves we find the invisible God making himself visible in the things that have been created. St. Paul reminds us clearly of all this.**

**After providing us with such a school of virtue in our own nature and in the created world, God gave us the angels to protect us. God raised up the patriarchs and prophets to guide us. God showed us signs and wonders to lead us to faith. God gave us the written law as a supplement to the law of our rational soul and the teaching of the world around us.**

**But we scorned all this. Perhaps we were just lazy. How different this attitude is from the continuing and unending love and care God shows toward us.**

**Finally, God gave us himself for our salvation. God poured out the wealth of divinity into our lowly condition. God took our nature and became a human like we are. God was with us as our teacher.**

**In all this God teaches us the greatness of divine love and proves it by word and deed. At the same time, God persuades all who will obey not to be hard-hearted but to imitate divine compassion.**

**Those who manage ordinary affairs have a certain love for what they do. It is like the love of a shepherd for a flock or an owner for personal possessions. But how can this be compared with the love of those who are of one flesh and blood, and especially with that of parents and children?**

**To make us realize how much we are loved, God calls himself our Heavenly Father. For our sake God became human. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit God gave us baptism and caused us to be born anew.**

**What more could we need to accept God' love for us? And if we are so loved by God shouldn't we love God with all our heart and soul and strength? That is God's call to us today. We have only to say: "I love you, Lord!"**

# **HOLDING FAST TO CHRIST'S GIFT OF FAITH**

**A letter of encouragement to fellow martyrs-to-be**

**by Fr. Andrew Kim Taegon**

For the last fifty or sixty years, ever since the coming of the Church to our land of Korea, the Faithful have suffered persecution. It still rages; many of our friends in the household of faith have been thrown into prison and experienced severe distress. We have become one body so shouldn't our hearts be filled with grief for those who suffer? As the Scriptures say, God numbers the very hairs of our heads and in all-embracing Providence cares for us all. We must care for one another.

Persecution can only remind us of the Lord's commands and be seen as a prize the Lord permits us to have. Hold fast, then, to the will of God and fight with all your heart the good fight under the leadership of Jesus. Conquer the diabolical power of the world, even as Christ has already vanquished it. Let us never fail in our love for one another. Let us support one another in standing firm until the Lord mercifully delivers us from these trials.

Think on this, my brothers and sisters, that God rules over all things in heaven and on earth. Then reflect on the reasons he chose each of us to be images and likenesses of Jesus. In this world of perils and hardships if we didn't recognize the Lord as our Creator what good would it bring us to be born or continue to exist? It is by God's grace that we received baptism, entered the Church, and have the honor of being called Christians. Yet, what good would even this do if we were Christians in name only?

A rice farmer cultivates the fields by plowing, fertilizing, and by many types of work, and all this without counting the cost. When harvest time comes and the crop is abundant farmers forget their labor and sweat and rejoice exultantly. The Lord is like a farmer and we are the Lord's rice field. We have been fertilized with grace and irrigated with Christ's blood. It is so that we may grow to maturity in these graces and find joy as God's children in heaven.

Dearest brothers and sisters, when he was in this world, the Lord Jesus bore countless sorrows and by his passion and death founded the Church. Now it is given increase through the suffering members of Christ's Body. No matter how fiercely the powers of this world oppress and opposes the Church they never bring it down.

Since the Lord's ascension and from the time of the apostles to the present, the Lord Jesus has made the Church grow in the midst of tribulations. There are twenty of us in this prison and by God's grace we are all strong in faith and in hope and in love. It seems that all of us are near the final ordeal. Let us remain steadfast in faith and in love for God and for one another in Christ. At last, and perhaps very soon, we will reach heaven and there rejoice together. I embrace you all in love. Christ's saving love fill and save us!

# **WHAT WE GAIN IN GIVING ALL TO CHRIST**

**A reflection based on a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman**

The book of Ecclesiastes draws us a most attractive picture of a life lived in this world by those who love and serve God but don't have a clear idea of what God might have in store for those who give their entire selves to him. "Eating their bread with joy, drinking their new wine with a merry heart, caring that their garments be always white, and their head never lacking an ointment, living joyfully with the spouse whom they love all the days of their fleeting life, and enjoying the good things their labors bring". This is a good life.

Clearly, the due use of God's temporal blessings is right and good, but one must not make them the primary object of our concern. They mustn't beguile our hearts from the "One Spouse" to whom we have been given in a more than earthly marriage. Indeed, according to the rule of the Gospel, the absence of wealth is more often a great blessing than is its possession. When we celebrate the memory of St. Matthew and recall his leaving his wealth and position and web of supporting relationships to follow Christ we are reminded of this fact and asked to consider carefully where our heart actually is. After all, where our heart is there is our real treasure.

The most obvious danger which worldly possession present is that they may become a substitute for the One who is our all. It is to him our supreme devotion is due at all times and in all circumstances. Ordinary possessions are present and clearly seen; God is invisible. Wealth is a means to accomplish whatever we want. Whether God will hear our prayers for such things is uncertain—though I think a negative answer is very likely. They can lead us to find our security in what is in our power. We are always endangered by sinful desires—the lust of the flesh and of the eyes, gluttony, drunkenness. We may love amusements and frivolous things, display and indulgence and luxuries, and give them more of our time and energies than the service of our God.

The thing is that we must never lose sight of our duty to bear the Cross. We may easily become dull and dim-sighted and lose the delicacy and precision of spiritual touch which gives faith and religious interests and prospects first place in our concern and labors. Does it seem to you somehow unnatural to risk all upon Christ and Christ's word? Do we find that the prospect of dying is a quite unwelcome topic of contemplation? Most of all, are we content to remain as we are and so fail to pray or contemplate the prospects for spiritual change?

The Lord is our God. Indeed, we are to actually serve God with the first fruits of our time and energies. This it is which ought to evoke our keenest enthusiasm and grandest dreams. What dutifulness, what affectionateness should be ours when we think of Christ and direct our hearts to him! This is what St. Matthew actually chose when he left his tax collector's booth and gave his life to the service of God under the direction of the finest of Masters, our Lord Jesus Christ. Ought we not, all of us, do the equivalent? Think of the gain and the loss will seem naught.

## **WHAT LOVE DO WE LEARN FROM MARY, OUR MOTHER?**

**A reflection from a text by Fr. Karl Rahner**

God chose the Holy Virgin to be the mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. It is a fact that Mary is the Mother of God. The reflection of God's People only gradually gained a more and more explicit awareness of the divine sonship of Our Lord. The same was true of our grasp of the unity of the Divine Person indwelling in Jesus Christ. Something very like this gradual development of explicit awareness happened concerning Mary's motherhood. This is a fact of history.

To this day Christians of all denominations confess their belief in the divine motherhood of Mary. Without this there can't be any genuine Christianity, a true faith in the coming of God in human flesh. If this is let go of—this oldest of the articles of faith concerning Mary—it is clear that only very little can be said about the mystery of the incarnation.

Mary, then, appears in Sacred History, like Abraham and other characters in the historical dialogue between God and our race. On the right decisions of these many, but especially on that of Mary, our salvation depended. We are built on those decisions as our foundation in faith.

We are told quite simply and plainly in Scripture: Look, there was a human person to whom an angel came with a mysterious message. This human person said, simply and unreservedly: Be it done unto me according to your word. Through these words that Mary spoke the Son of the Eternal Father came down to this earth, into our flesh, into our history, and into each of our lives.

God has taken to himself for ever this world, in the flesh of the Son. All this happened because of Mary; i.e., it happened by the consent of her faith. She became the Mother of God and the Mother of the Incarnate Word. By her loving, trusting faith all this happened. Now notice that hers was not the only decision needed. Jesus had many ancestors. And Jesus has many children, through Mary. We are among them. What does God wish to achieve through the loving, trusting, consent of our faith? Perhaps that depends on how well we learn to love and trust and believe through the example of our mother, Mary.

The way Holy Scripture tells of Mary's motherhood places her in the center of a tremendous, mysterious, shatteringly great drama that is being acted out between God and this world with its race of humans. This motherhood is never merely physical. It is a free and personal act of faith. It is an act which she lived out in the presence of her human-divine son and which he lived out even to the Cross. He hands it on to us. Mary's act of faith takes place within the context of Sacred History. When we confess that the Word Became Flesh we are professing the historical fact of an act of free self-giving love and that such a fact can change all history. The incarnation of God in human flesh and history did not end with Jesus but began. Jesus lives and lives in us, if we are willing to freely make the same loving and trusting act of faith that Mary made. She teaches us how to do this. It is this act that will transform the world so that it becomes part of the Kingdom of God. We are called to be part of that transformation. Mary teaches us our part and shows us how to play that part under God's direction.