

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. **The Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Oct. 14 **THE LORD'S CALL AND OUR REPLY**
 A reflection by John Henry Cardinal Newman
- Mon. **Memorial of St. Teresa of Jesus**
15 **DO YOU WANT TO GIVE YOURSELF TO GOD?**
 A reflection from The Book of Life by St. Teresa of Jesus
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 28th Week in Ordinary Time**
16 **THE GROANS THE SPIRIT UTTERS WITHIN US**
 From Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini
- Wed. **Memorial of St. Ignatius of Antioch**
17 **PERSEVERANCE AS A GIFT OF GOD**
 From St. Ignatius Letter to the Church of Antioch
- Thurs. **THE FEAST OF ST. LUKE, EVANGELIST**
18 **THE HUMILITY OF AN EVANGELIST**
 A reflection developed from a homily by St. Bernard
- Fri. **SS. John de Brebeuf & Isaac Joques & Companions**
19 **THE HUMILITY OF A MARTYR**
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- Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
20 **MAKING A PARADISE FOR GOD TO DWELL IN**
 Developed from a sermon by St. Aelred of Rievaulx

THE LORD'S CALL AND OUR REPLY

A reflection by John Henry Cardinal Newman

“Go and sell everything you own and follow me!” All through our life Christ is calling us. The first time was in baptism but the calls continued. Whether we obeyed or not Christ graciously went on calling. If we fall away from our baptism, he calls us to repent. If we answer the call, we are called again and again, from grace to grace and from holiness to greater holiness, and as long as we live. Abraham was called from his home, Peter from his nets, from his tax office Matthew was called, Elisha from his farm, Nathanael from his retreat. We are all called from one thing to another without rest, mounting toward an eternal rest. Christ keeps calling so as to keep justifying and sanctifying us more and more.

How wonderful if we understood these facts. We are slow to master the truth that Christ is walking among us now and by hand or eye or voice bidding us to follow him. We don't understand that this call happens right now. Don't think it took place only in the Apostles' day. We are called now! Do we watch for our calls? Perhaps we don't have eyes to recognize the Lord, as the Beloved Apostle did when the other disciples didn't. Jesus stood on the shore and told them to cast their net and that one disciple said to Peter, *“It is the Lord!”*

My meaning is this. People who are living their faith from time to time will glimpse truths they didn't previously know and had had no need to consider. Now these truths, these facts, are brought home to them powerfully! They are truths that involved duties; they are precepts and call for the response of obedience. It is in such ways that Christ calls us now. Nothing happens that is miraculous or extraordinary in the way Christ deals with us. Christ works through our natural abilities and the circum-stances of our lives. Yet what happens is in God's Providence. For us it is the same thing as Christ's voice was to those he spoke to when on earth.

It doesn't matter whether Christ calls by a visible presence, by a voice, or by our consciences. The crucial thing is that we feel we are being commanded. We may obey or disobey; we may accept the command as Samuel did or St. Paul did. Or we may put it aside like the rich young man who had to care for his possessions first. We don't have to be afraid of spiritual pride when we follow Christ's call. The important thing is that we respond with earnestness. We need to be determined to do God's will. We simply have to say, *“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”*. We simply have to ask, *“Lord, what do you want me to do?”*

O God, grant us more of this spirit you gave to young Samuel. Help us to look only to one thing—to feel that the one thing we need to do is please our God! So let's each and all beg God day by day to reveal himself to us more and more fully. May our senses come alive! May he give us sight and hearing and taste and touch to perceive the world to come emerging in our daily world. We need to say with sincerity, *“Guide me with your counsel and then receive me into your glory!”* Do you think like this? *“Whom do I have in heaven except you? There is no one on earth that I long for as I long for you! God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!”* Pray for the grace to think this day in and day out.

DO YOU WANT TO GIVE YOURSELF TO GOD?

A refection from The Book of Life by St. Teresa of Avila

It is easy enough to promise to give your will to God but when you come to the test it is the most difficult thing in the world, especially if you would do it perfectly. Yet God knows what each of us is able to bear and when God finds one who is brave God doesn't hesitate to accomplish His will in that person. So I want to warn you and help you understand what God's will is. Realize, as the saying goes, whom you are dealing with and what our good Jesus is offering on your behalf to the Heavenly Father. Make sure you know what you are giving God when you pray, "Your will be done!"

First, you are asking that God's will may be done in you. It is this and nothing else that you are praying for. Second, you needn't be afraid that God will give you wealth or pleasures or great honors or any earthly thing. God's love for you is not so weak as that! God sets a far greater value on your gift, and wants to reward your generosity. God gives you the Kingdom, even in this life.

Would you like to see how God treats people who pray this petition without reserve? Ask God's Only Son, who prayed it genuinely and resolutely in the Garden. Wasn't God's will accomplish in Jesus through the trial, sufferings, and insults and persecutions God sent, until at last Jesus' life was ended on the Cross? You see, then, what God gave to the one God loves best of all. That shows you what God's will is.

These things are God's gifts in this world and he gives them in proportion to his love for us! To those God loves more God gives more. God's gifts are measured by the courage God sees we have and the love that we bear for our God. Fervent love can suffer a great deal. Lukewarmness will last very briefly. I myself believe that love is the gauge of the crosses, great or small, that we are able to bear.

If you have much love, think of what you are doing. Don't let the promises you make to God—who is so great a Lord—be no more than empty compliments. Brace yourself to suffer whatever God wants. Any other way of surrendering our will to God is like offering someone a precious stone and then holding on to it when God reaches out to accept the gift. Such mockery isn't for the one who endured so much mockery for us. It would certainly be wrong to mock God in this way every time we pray the Lord's Prayer.

Let's give God once and for all that precious and beautiful gift we have offered him so many times. The fact is that God gave us this very reality that we give back in our prayer. I want to encourage you to yield yourself entirely to our Creator. Submit your will to God's. Detach yourself from created things. Our good Master knows very well how greatly we will benefit by fulfilling this promise we make to the Heavenly Father. It won't be long till we find ourselves at our journey's end. Then we will drink of the fountain of living water and joy.

THE GROANS THAT THE SPIRIT UTTERS WITHIN US

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

“We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our complete adoption as children of God”. St. Paul goes on to say that this begins with our groaning cry for the redemption of our bodies. Yes, we have the first fruits of the Spirit, and it is the Spirit that groans within and with us for freedom, for liberation for all that weighs us down and keeps us from giving our entire self to our God.

We have already had some taste of what it means to be saved. For example, how often have we groaned to be free from nonsense, or from frustration and the emptiness of what we thought would fill us with joy. So we first groan because we know that our salvation isn't yet complete. Our groans express our deepest and truest desires for liberation, to become fully what we are.

We are really children of God. Yet how often we live out of our ignorance. How we groan to be free of our limited awareness and the mediocrity that goes with it and causes us to lose heart and give in to laziness. We want to speak to our God freely and confidently and experience God's love and salvation.

We groan to be freed from the way our bodies often weigh us down and refuse to help us find the fullness of life we long for. We want to be able to live our bodily condition as a pure gift. St. Pope John Paul II said many wonderful things about our bodiliness, especially as a symbol of our espousal to God in Christ. So we groan under all that weighs us down and prevents us from experiencing this freedom. We are worn out, tempted, sensuous, obtuse, unable, forgetful of self and others. So much to groan about before our Heavenly Father.

All these groanings are the signs that the Spirit is within us, lives in us, and is leading us towards something we don't yet have but whose seeking gives meaning to our long and difficult journey toward the Kingdom of God.

Can we see that these aren't just private and personal groans but those of all our companions and fellow believers? Can we see they are the Spirit's groans—because God wants all these good things for us even more than we do? Our Heavenly Father speaks to us too in these spiritual groanings. In God's love expressed in this way we hear peace, God's tenderness, confidence and a longing to abandon ourselves in the gift that is love. That is the beginning of freedom.

PERSEVERENCE AS A GIFT OF LOVE

From St. Ignatius' Letter to the Church of Antioch

The last era of our world has arrived. We must either fear it, as expressing a gathering storm of wrath or cherish it as a present time of grace. You must do one or the other, but, in any case, let's keep in union with Jesus Christ! That's how we come to possess the true life!

Apart from Christ nothing should fascinate us. In union with Christ I carry about the chains I now bear, and look at them as spiritual pearls of great price. May they be truly pearls! May I have the privilege to treat them so through your prayers. I hope that I will always have a share in the sufferings of Christ and in this way. I hope to wear these chains which I rise from the dead! Then I will be found in the ranks of the Christians of Ephesus. They have always been of one mind with the Apostles and they are that through the power of Jesus Christ.

Make the effort to meet more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to offer God praise. When you do this the forces of Satan are overthrown; Satan's baneful influences are neutralized precisely by the unanimity of your faith. This oneness brings peace and that is a precious reality. It puts an end to every war waged by heavenly or earthly enemies.

None of what I have said is strange to you. I only pray that you will persevere and to the end. Faith is the beginning of true life and its end is love. When faith and love blend perfectly with one another we have God. Everything else that makes for right living comes from these two. No one who professes faith truly sins. No one who loves hates. The tree is known by its fruit, the Lord tells us.

Similarly, people who belong to Christ are known to belong by their conduct. Surely, what now matters isn't mere professing of faith but whether one is found to have lived it actually and to the end.

It is better to keep silence and be something truly than to talk about it and be nothing. Teaching is an excellent thing. But it is only if the speaker practices what is taught. There is one Teacher. He spoke and all was done. Yet even what that Teacher did silently is worthy of the Heavenly Father. God has made the words of Jesus really his own. God hears them even in his silence.

That shows that Jesus is perfect. Jesus acts through speech and is understood through silence. Nothing is hidden from our Lord. Even our secrets are known.

Let us, then, do everything in the conviction that God dwells in us. In that way we will truly be God's temples. In that way God will truly be our God and within us. This is the truth. This will be made manifest before everyone's eyes. That is why we should love God and love as God deserves to be loved. May he grant this to us each day.

THE HUMILITY OF AN EVANGELIST

A reflection developed from a homily by St. Bernard

How better can one celebrate the love for Christ, shown by one who dedicated his life to the spread of the Gospel, than by contemplating the way St. Luke lived the words he preached? In his Gospel (14:1f) we read: *“All who exalt themselves will be humbled; and those who humble themselves shall be exalted”*. These words were first lived and only then written down so that we might live them too. If one reflects on the life of a human person, a sinner but one saved by Christ, one can discern two types of happiness and two types of misery. There, on the one hand, is a perfect happiness in Heaven, and also an earthly happiness in Paradise. On the other hand, there is the misery sinful humankind experiences in this world and there is the complete and utter misery that is hell. This can be summed up by saying that there is fullness of life and a shadow of life, and there is a shadow of unhappiness and an extreme and utter unhappiness. We find ourselves naturally in the shadow of unhappiness and fearful lest we fall further. In Christ we have the hope of a more than natural happiness and hope that we will receive the grace to climb the ladder that leads to it. That ladder is one of humility.

St. Luke, as a physician, knew full well the shadow land of human misery in which we dwell, all too often and too long. As a believer he knew also of the happiness we humans all lost in our first parents. But as a believer in Jesus Christ, and a fellow evangelist with the Apostle Paul, he gloried in the hope of the perfect and everlasting happiness we are offered. But he knew that we ascend to such happiness only by humility. What seems a descent actually is an ascent. We see this in the way he effaced himself and his evangelizing work by pointing always to Jesus Christ and to St. Paul as his herald to the gentile world, in which he himself had lived. His pride is simply in the fact that he was a humble servant of St. Paul, especially in his various illnesses.

Scripture says *“In your truth you have humbled me.”* (Ps 118). God humbles us by convincing us of the truth of our situation and our total dependence on God. Those who are humbled by truth are truly humbled. Fortunately, the Lord didn't say that those who exalt themselves shall be exalted, but *“Those who humble themselves shall be exalted”* (Matt.23:12).

However, many are humiliated but not humble. They are people who ignore the slippery paths they walk and the darkness that blinds them. They bear a heavy yoke and a heavier conscience and a weight of condemnation. Such people have loved vanity rather than truth. And this shows us how we can be exalted! We must cling to the truth, even when it humbles us! We can avoid hardness of heart if we cling voluntarily to the truth. This is a heavy cure to bear for our sin, but not as heavy a burden as pride. We need to be cured of this that we may be healed by Christ. St. Luke points always to Christ as our true physician whom he can only imitate so imperfectly. Did Luke, like Paul, kick against the goad before he surrendered to the thorn of truth that humbled him? We know only that he teaches us to do just that and we know he sought always to practice what he preached. Daily we have opportunity to imitate this humility.

THE HUMILITY OF A MARTYR

A reflection from one of St. Isaac's letters to his provincial

During my captivity I often recalled my past life, so blameworthy because of my sins and infidelity to God. I groaned at being stopped in the middle of my course, and because I had no good works to send before me to God. I felt rejected by God and was without the sacraments. In this situation I wanted to live and dreaded death and I moaned in my distress: "*When shall there be an end to this misery and grief?*" I wanted God to bring calm after the storm and fill us with joy and exultation instead of tears. If those days had not be shorted, I would have perished.

I turned to Holy Scripture, my usual refuge. I kept certain passages in memory. These taught me to "*think of the Lord's goodness*" (Wisdom 1:1). Even if I felt no sensible devotion I could recall that "*the holy one shall live by faith*" (Heb. 10:38). I would explore these passages and problem the smallest streams of devotion in my efforts to quench my constant spiritual thirst. I would "*consider God's law by day and by night*" and remind myself "*were it not that your law is my great delight I should by now have perished in my grief*".

I spent two months in that quasi-retreat and became, like St. Bernard, the disciple of the beech trees; I thought of nothing but God. Because the natives hated me and could no longer stand me, they sent me back to my village before the usual time. The trip took eight days and I was loaded with the enormous weight of the food that I had to carry. I had become a beast of burden before my God. Still I tried to remain with God always, not knowing what awaited me in the next village. Some who had preceded us spread all sorts of rumors.

On the road I was almost naked and spent most of the night outdoors. I suffered very much from the cold. The wounds on my fingers which had only closed up toward the middle of January weren't yet completely healed. In the village they gave me a thin skin to use in addition to the old coat I was wearing. In these cloths I went through the streets begging our Lord to let me join the saints who had served him "*dressed in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, distressed, mistreated. Every day I observe the natives wearing the woolens and vestments that had been in our baggage, while day and night I was stiff from cold. That was not important as was seeing them use vestments for secular purposes. One had taken to humeral veils and fashioned a sort of stockings.*

Throughout the entire period, which lasted until about the middle of January, I could say before God: "*To this very hour we are victims of hunger and thirst; we are poorly clad and knocked around; we are vagabonds and wear ourselves out with manual labor. When they call us ugly names we speak well of them. When they persecute us, we bear it with patience. When they insult us we peak gently. We have practically become the world's scum, the scapegoat of society.*"

MAKING A PARADISE FOR GOD TO DWELL IN

A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Aelred of Rievaulx

“In the beginning the Lord God planted a garden of delight”. It was intended for us all but we lost it by sin. But God had already planned how to save us. This is the plan in which a virgin conceives without ordinary intercourse. Our Blessed Lady was filled with grace so that within her there should be a garden of delight in which our Blessed Lord could come to dwell. She is the paradise that God the Heavenly Father prepared for the new Adam.

Paradise was a beautiful place, full of the most beautiful trees and every sort of physical beauty. A fountain rose up in it and watered the trees and flowers and all else. Already you can see how rightly the heart of the holy virgin was a paradise. In it the good land bore thirty-fold and sixty-fold and a hundred-fold. Thirty-fold fruitfulness belongs to conjugal chastity, sixty-fold to the chastity of widows and one hundred-fold to virginity. Now you perceive how fertile this paradise is. Mary in herself is a mother, a widow and a virgin. She is the mother of God. Since she was espoused to God the cross left her a widow. Through her example who can say how many have remained virgins wholly dedicated to the service of God?

Mary, then, is fruitful beyond all others and is, indeed, the fountain which springs up in God's new paradise and bears fruit in all the virtues. Think of her piety and her humility. What is this water? It is the Spirit and by the Lord's promise it is like a fountain bubbling up with us to eternal life. And the Spirit not only made a paradise within the Virgin and Mother Mary but makes one within us. Christ wants to dwell within us too.

Therefore, all who make within their spirits a paradise designed by the Holy Spirit have received within a life-giving fountain and from it rise four rivers, the virtues of prudence, courage, temperance and justice from which all the other virtues needed for a holy life flow. No one can be wise without prudence and with it one cannot discern worldly from godly prudence. Without this who can know how to be temperant and so worthy to eat the supper of the Lord. Having overcome our own appetites, we are ready to be fierce and strong for the faith and for living it in charity. The first fruit of these virtues is justice, animated by true love for all and especially for the poor.

If we wish the New Adam to dwell within us it is clear we must make a paradise in our hearts. There the Spirit can cause an ever-flowing fountain to bubble up and make us fruitful. But we must not touch the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad, which means letting self-will spring up. Let us beg our Lord Jesus Christ that through the example and intercession of his most sweet mother to help us build this paradise in us. From it we may cross over to the one where the Son lives with the Father and the Spirit and where God reigns forever and ever. Today is the day to begin building, if we haven't yet begun. That is the work to which God calls us today.