

# THE SIXTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

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**Sunday**    **The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Feb. 12**    **Daily Reconciliation**  
                  A reflection taken from a homily by St. John Chrysostom

**Mon**        **Monday of the Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**  
**13**         **How God Builds Us Up**  
                  A reflection from a homily by Gregory Palamas

**Tues**       **Memorial of Sts. Cyril & Methodius**  
**14**         **Never Be Ashamed of the Cross**  
                  A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Methodius

**Wed**        **Wednesday of the Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**  
**15**         **Letting God Write in our Hearts**  
                  A reflection taken from a homily by Origen of Alexandria

**Thurs**      **Thursday of the Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**  
**16**         **Rejoicing in God's Gifts**  
                  A reflection from Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love

## **DAY FOR REMEMBRANCE OF THE DEAD**

**Fri**         **Friday of the Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**  
**17**         **Preparing for God's Call to the Kingdom**  
                  A reflection from a sermon by St. Augustine of Hippo

**Sat**         **Memorial of Our Lady**  
**18**         **Mary Teaches us how to Learn**  
                  A reflection from a sermon by St. Bede the Venerable

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# **DAILY RECONCILIATION**

**A reflection from a homily by St. John Chrysostom**

Listen to the Lord's words: *"If you are bringing a gift to the altar and there remember that a brother or sister has something against you, leave the gift there before the altar and go and be reconciled first. Then come and offer your gift."* Does the Lord really want me to do this, literally? Yes, he replies. A sacrifice is offered in order that you may live in "peace" with your neighbors. You can't attain the objective of a sacrifice if you fail to "make peace" with them. Your lack of peace would make your sacrifice fruitless. Consider why this is the case.

All that God commands us to do is for a purpose. That goal is a sharing of life, first with God and then with one another. If someone has, as we say, a problem with you, then you aren't able to share as God calls you to share, either with our neighbor or with our God. Christ gave his life for you. Will you hold a grudge against a fellow servant of God? If you hold something against another how can you approach the table of peace? Our Master didn't refuse to undergo every sort of suffering for you. Won't you let go of your angers and irritations in imitation of him?

Isn't love the root and wellspring and mother of every blessing? What if someone offers you an outrageous insult? Has that person wronged you times without number? But that person hasn't crucified you—as people who were angry and irritated with Jesus did to him, and he forgave them from the Cross! If you refuse to "make peace" with another how can you ask God to forgive your sins? What does your conscience say when you repeat the words, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us"?

Jesus has offered his blood for the salvation, which means for the peace that is a right relation with God, and done it for all of us. What could you do that would be better than that? If we refuse to forgive and be reconciled with others we only harm ourselves. There is no one the Lord is farther from than the person whose soul seethes with rage and anger at others. The reason the Son of God came into the world was to reconcile the human race with their Heavenly Father, and so with others. As St. Paul says, *"He has reconciled all things, destroying enmity by the Cross"*. Just as he came to make peace between us and our God so he calls us to be peacemakers for one another. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God."

We must do what Christ, the Son of God, did and become promoters of peace insofar as a human person can. And now he reminds us that the only good deed which is essential when we would offer a sacrifice is reconciliation with one another. This shows that of all the excellences that a human person can have love is the most important. Love leaves nothing untried in seeking to find a way to make and live at peace with all.

# **HOW GOD BUILDS US UP**

**A reflection from a homily by Gregory Palamas**

To create us God brought the entire universe into being starting from nothing. Without this we could not maintain our life. But this was not all that our God did. The entire perceptible universe was made to be a kind of mirror in which we can see divine goodness and love. In spiritual contemplation of the world around us we can reach up to heaven, as though we were climbing a wondrous ladder.

God has implanted in our minds an innate law, a kind of rule and infallible judge and unerring teacher, which we call our conscience. If we look deep within ourselves we need nothing other than this to instruct us in the knowledge of good. Even if we look outside ourselves we find the invisible God made visible through the created world, as St. Paul says.

God in this way opens a path by which we may learn what is excellent and good through our own nature and through the created world. What's more, God gave us angels to protect us, raised up the patriarchs and prophets to be our guides and showed us signs and miracles to lead us into faith. God also gave us a written law as a help to the innate law of our minds and the teaching of creation. And then, at last, when we had scorned everything given us in our apathy, God gave himself to us for our salvation.

How utterly different is God's continuing love and care as compared with our apathy. God poured the wealth of divinity into our humble state by taking our nature and becoming a human being like us. He was called our teacher and in these ways teaches us even now the greatness of his own love for us, proving it by both word and deed. At the same time, God urges us to imitate his great compassion and so break down the hardness of many hearts.

Although there is love involved in the management of worldly affairs, just as there is in the relation of a shepherd to a flock, and even in the devotion of an owner of property to personal possessions, this hardly compares with the love that unites families in close relationship—especially the love that parents feel for their children. All this is based on the relationship that our Lord establishes with us and proves in his own love.

For our sake God became human and gave us a new life through baptism and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Will we respond to such love with our own love, and by cooperating with God's efforts to build us up and make us more fully the kind of persons he created us to be? Today let us begin again. His grace never leaves us.

# **NEVER BE ASHAMED OF THE CROSS**

**A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Methodius**

Some think that God judges the same things good or wicked as we human beings do; they think that God measures goodness in the same way their own feelings do. But God doesn't use the opinions of human beings as rule and measure of what is praiseworthy or blameworthy. Those who do this only forget their human ignorance and the way we fall so far short of the goodness and beauty of God.

Our God draws everything into life by the Word. God leads all things toward good and is his own measure of it, being the Complete Good in himself and the only Complete Beauty. God beholds himself and sees his own rule and measure and so teaches us what is pleasing to Him and what is truly good and beautiful, rather than what may or may not be pleasing to human beings.

This merciful God has willed to deliver us from corrupt likings and affections. He has done it in a way that put the demons to shame. They thought they could be overcome only by one vastly stronger than themselves and, see, they are overcome by a one who put on humanity in order to overcome them. It was done through the Cross, even though demons and evil people despise it and try to convince us to be ashamed of it.

The Cross was given us to deliver us from the inner chains which imprisoned us by reason of our disobedience. The Word suffered the Cross that he might deliver us and set us free—we who have been deceived by so many errors. He restored us to a supreme and godlike majesty, restoring us to that divine life from which we had alienated ourselves.

By the Cross, by the mere sign of the cross, evil passions and wicked obsessions are blunted and transformed. Christ's passion was in effect the passion of all evil passions. The death of Christ teaches us to love wholeheartedly what seems foolish and bad to many. But his desire was wholly for the Heavenly Father's will and when we share that desire all evil flees from our desires and longings—now they are for God.

We speak of the "impassibility" and "equanimity" of the Word become human. We mean that when one clings to the Heavenly Father and his will nothing can move one and one remains serenely in the love of what is everlasting. Thus though Christ was mortal that which is immortal overcame mortality in him, and can overcome it in us. The flesh was crucified in him in order to draw forth from it an immortality that it lost when it departed from God. Death was vanquished when the Word joined divinity to our humanity and made us instruments consecrated to God.

We are formed for the worship of God and sing a song of truth. We are lyres of life's song, even when our strings are struck by pain and bad longings. We cannot return again to the discord of corruption. This is why we bear a cross with Christ. Let yourself be transformed wholly by God!

# **LETTING GOD WRITE IN OUR HEARTS**

**A reflection taken from a homily by Origen of Alexandria**

In the beginning of mankind God said, "*Let us make humans in our own image and likeness*". The work of so great and skilled an artist as the Son of God can never be destroyed by a creature's malice. It can, however, be obscured through negligence. So God's image remains within us always, even though we may superimpose on it earthly likenesses, concocted by our own fantasy. We paint these likenesses ourselves using various kinds of sin as a kind of palette of assorted colors. The only remedy is to call upon the help of the one who tells us through a prophet, "I have wiped out your transgressions like a cloud and swept away your sins like a mist".

When God does this the beautiful image which was created in us from the beginning appears in all its radiance. Holy Scripture makes use of all sorts of comparisons to teach us how to recognize the stains of sin and be purified. But suppose we consider this using yet another comparison.

Think of your life as a register containing some entries made by God and others that you yourself have made. Your entries are your sins and God's are the good words and deeds to which the Holy Spirit inspires you.

Mark, in his Gospel, says "God has canceled the legal bond which stood against us; God has set it aside nailing it to the cross". St. Paul uses this comparison, but he understands the bond spoken of as the obligations we put ourselves under on account of our sins. Each and every one of us is answerable for the sins we commit. When we commit them we are writing our own record. Thus the prophet Daniel describes the judgement of God as an opening of books. These are the books containing the record of people's sins.

When we sin we ourselves write our own case record. From God's side, however, the Holy Spirit writes a record of all the good we do. Recall how St. Paul said, "you yourselves are a letter written not with ink but by the Spirit of the Living God, a letter written not on stone tablets but on human hearts". So we have within ourselves God's record written by the Holy Spirit. Now observe that once you have come to the Cross of Christ and to the grace of baptism that bond you have written within you by your sins is nailed to the cross and canceled. Don't rewrite what has been canceled! Don't renew what has been done away with.

Keep within yourself only God's record as written on your heart by the Holy Spirit. Let the Spirit write so many entries that you cannot count them all. That can fill your day with love and praise for God and Jesus Christ our Savior.

# **REJOICING IN GOD'S GIFTS**

A reflection from Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love

When God made us God acted as a kindly Father in power, as a kindly Mother in wisdom, and as the Holy Spirit in love and goodness. All are One God, One Lord. In this union God is our real, true husband and we a beloved wife and sweetheart. God is never displeased with those he loves in this way. "I love you and you love me", he says, "and our love will never be broken".

I seemed to see the Blessed Trinity working. I saw that there were these three attributes—fatherhood, motherhood and lordship—all in one God. In God almighty we have a Father who sustains and blesses us with our natural being. By the skill and wisdom of the Second Person we are sustained, restored and saved with regard to our sensible nature and God is in this way our mother, just as God is our brother and savior. In our good Lord, the Holy Spirit, we have, after our life and hardships are over, the reward and rest which surpasses forever everything we can possibly desire.

Our life too is threefold. In its first stage we have our being, in its second we have growth, and in the third we receive perfection. Thus, in our Father, God Almighty, we have our being. In our merciful Mother we have reformation and renewal, and in our separate parts we are integrated into perfect humanity. In yielding to the gracious impulse of the Holy Spirit we are made perfect.

Think on all the gifts showered upon us. Our essence is in our Father and in our Mother, God Almighty and God all-wise and merciful. It is perfected in our Lord the Holy Spirit, God all-good. Our multi-faceted essential nature is entire in each person of the Trinity, God who is One. But it is not only God who shows himself to us in each of these attributes. God is showing us ourselves in the marvelous gifts that we are given.

In Jesus Christ we see all that God gives to us. In him are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit too. In him we, and all that we are, has been taken out of hell with a strong arm, and out of earth's wretchedness, and has been wonderfully raised to Heaven and united, most blessedly, to the one who is our true being. We have been developed in spiritual wealth and character through all the Divine excellences, and Christ's. It is perfected by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. What should we do but give thanks?

# **PREPARING FOR GOD'S CALL TO THE KINGDOM**

**A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Augustine of Hippo**

**Watch yourselves! This world is passing away for each of us. Remember how the Lord foretells in the gospels that it will be the same on the last day as it was on the day when Noah entered the ark. That is how it will be on our personal last day too. "People ate and drank, bought and sold and married right up to the day when Noah entered the ark: Then the flood came and they all perished."**

**The reason the ark took so long to build was to make unbelievers wake up. Noah worked on it for a hundred years, yet people weren't awake enough to say to themselves: The man of God must have good reason for building this ark; it must mean that the human race will soon be destroyed! We see people of 100 years old and we don't pause to think: This person will soon be called to God, and so will I, even if I live to be 100.**

**So the ark is still being built and the hundred years represents the days in which we live. The whole period of time that is our life is prefigured by that number. If those, then, who paid no heed when Noah was building the ark deserved the death that came to them, what do people deserve who are careless about their own salvation? Christ is building his Church and is drawing us nearer and nearer to his Kingdom where that Church finds its true home. So the people of that day have become a fearful example for us, their descendants, because they did not believe and many still don't.**

**Christ, who is God become human, is building the Church as our ark. Every day incorruptible timber—i.e., believers who renounce this world—are being added to this ark's structure. So let us fast and pray for tomorrow we may die. Those who say "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we shall die" have no hope for rising again. But we who, thanks to the words of the prophets and the preaching of Christ and the apostles, believe in and prepare for death and the resurrection, we who hope for everlasting life, must not lose courage or let our minds be dulled by distractions and dissipations.**

**How many of our friends and family members have been called by God into the Heavenly Kingdom. Many of them answered this call filled with hope and trust in God's love. We pray for them so let us pray for ourselves. They show us what we need to do. Let us be dressed for action and keep our lamps alight as we await the Lord's call and even his coming. We wait with all sobriety and we wait, in fasting and prayer. We do it not so we may avoid death but so we may die without fear. We prepare to join that cloud of witnesses to the importance of trusting in God. They have gone before us and with Jesus prepare our place in God's Kingdom. Let us join them in prayer for one another and all whom God is to call soon to come to him and the Church assembled in Heaven.**

# **MARY TEACHES US HOW TO LEARN**

**A reflection from a homily by St. Bede the Venerable**

Beloved brethren, the meaning of the gospel is clear, and yet we struggle to grasp how it applies to us. In this we imitate the Virgin Mother of Jesus. She knew what God had asked of her and she had meditated on the Law which God had given Israel through Moses, and yet she had to reflect constantly and with all the effort she was capable of to see the meaning of God's works in her and in the life of her son, Jesus the Christ.

The gospel tells us that "she kept all these things in her heart, pondering them". What things are referred to? The events in the life of Jesus, and of Joseph and herself, especially the unexpected ones, each required much reflection if it was to be understood and become part of her prayerful thanksgiving to God. Everything that she knew to have been said or done by the Lord or concerning him the Virgin Mother kept diligently turning over in her mind and heart—especially in her heart. She committed it all carefully to memory so that when the time came to share these things about the Lord's incarnation she could base what she said upon a carefully meditated record of deeds and facts.

It is clear that this is told us as an example. Let us imitate the faithful Mother of the Lord. Let us repel the invasion of vain and harmful thoughts by imprinting on our hearts every word and deed of our Lord and Savior. Let us meditate on what they can teach us day and night! If we wish, in the blessed age to come, to dwell in the house of the Lord and to praise him forever, we must anticipate this in the present age, by our frequent visits to the church and by our constant prayers, what we are to do without end. We want to pray with understanding.

Daily we sing God's praise in church. But our lives must show forth in every place where the Lord rules—which is absolutely every place there is, and both in words and deeds—all that redounds to the praise and glory of our Creator and redeemer. The gospel tells us that Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and with his fellows. As by growing in these ways he made accessible to others the gifts of wisdom and grace that were his, so likewise he tirelessly rouses us to praise of God the Heavenly Father. He carried out himself what he taught others.

His Virgin Mother imitated him in this, and we must imitate them both. Scripture calls to us: Let your light so shine before others that all may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven. In Jesus and in Mary we learn what God intends to accomplish in us. If we sense our inability and weakness we are learning humility. Mary was above all humble; she acted this out in her efforts to understand and then let her light shine before all. If we are humble like her will shall shine out as she does and many hearts will thereby be opened to God. This is the path of learning. It is God's ways that we need to learn so that the Savior may grow within our hearts and lives and give glory to the Heavenly Father.