

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sunday The Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Nov. 5 Where Is Our Teacher?

A reflection by Bishop Jacques Bossuet

Mon Monday of the Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time

6 Depending on God

A reflection by Abbot Paschal Radbert

Tues Tuesday of the Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time

7 Leadership in the Church

Developed from text by Sr. Dianne Bergant

Wed Wednesday of the Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time

8 Celebrating Church

A reflection taken from a homily by

Bishop Thomas of Villanova

Thurs Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

9 Celebrating the Lateran Basilica

A reflection from a homily by Fr. Henri du Lubac

MONASTIC DESERT DAY

Fri Memorial of St. Pope Leo the Great

10 Cast Your Cares Upon the Lord

A reflection derived from a homily by St. Pope Leo

Sat Memorial of St. Martin of Tours

11 Learning from the Faith of Others

A reflection from a letter by St. Pope John XXIII

WHERE IS OUR TEACHER?

A reflection by Bishop Jacques Bossuet

Addressing the people and his disciples Jesus said: “The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by what they do, since they don’t practice what they preach.” Christ is our only true teacher. Unless we listen to his voice speaking within us, no teacher or preacher will be able to lead us to the truth.

To understand this we need to be deeply impressed by the following Christian truth: Besides the sound that strikes the ear there is a secret voice that speaks within and this is the real. Without it all that human words can say is a vain echo of truth. The Son of God doesn’t allow us to assume the title of master, for there is only one master and teacher. None but God can really teach us. Neither humans nor angels can do more than point toward the truth but only God can teach in a way that enables us to distinguish truth from falsehood.

If the sun isn’t shining it’s useless to point to a painting in a dark church and talk about delicate lines and rich colors. We are unable to see anything without sun. There are many ideas that claim our attention and without God’s light we can distinguish the true from the false among them.

The light that enlightens all who are born into this world must help us. Only in Christ’s light can we differentiate correctly. It is our love for Jesus that enables us to savor what is really of God. Jesus is the one who opens our hearts and speaks inwardly. Are we listening for his voice?

DEPENDING ON GOD

A reflection by Abbot Paschal Radbert

Christ is called master and teacher by right of nature rather than by courtesy. Through his incarnation and life on earth we are taught the way to eternal life. The key is humility. Having told his disciples not to allow themselves to be called masters or to love seats of honor he set an example of humility. Look at me, he says, “The Son of Man didn’t come to be served by to serve, and to give his life for the many.”

This was said not only for the instruction of disciples but for all who teach in the Church. None must seek positions of honor but whoever wishes to be great must become the servant of all, as Christ himself did! If anyone wants a high office let him want the labor it entails. Let a person long to serve and minister to everyone.

After reserving the office of teaching to himself, Christ gave the rule that whoever seeks greatness must become servant of all. Learn from me, he said, for I am meek and humble of heart. So anyone who wants to be Christ’s disciple has to hurry and learn the lesson Christ teaches. A perfect disciple is like the Master. If one refuses to learn the Master’s lesson one is not even a disciple. We all learn, and we all teach others, by example. The first lesson Christ teaches is humility and the second is service. This is the example Christ calls us to give.

LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

A reflection developed by a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant

The Bible speaks very often about abuses of position. Because of human weakness the same abuses exist in the Church as in society and politics. Israel's prophets often charged priests with abusing their position to get personal gain or glory rather than to teach and lead others to God. It seems that even legitimate authority figures can be untrustworthy, whether or not they are priests. Jesus says that the Pharisees are abusing their leadership for personal gain.

Notice that Jesus accuses such people of not practicing what they preach in a way that leads others into God's reign, God's Kingdom. They preach loving God with one's entire heart and loving one's neighbor as one's self but don't actually lift a finger to help others do either of these things. Jesus tells us to live the truths they teach even though they themselves don't live them. Isn't that relevant today?

It might seem that such a message is meant more for those who lead the Church and for priests than it is for us. Yet the fact is that we teach. Parents teach their children more by their example than in any other way. They teach them what is important, and too often it has little relation to what Christ tells us is important. Yet such teaching shapes a child's entire subsequent life. Who do we teach? You can answer this question by asking who watches you and uses your example in deciding how to act. Maybe what we are showing others is a way of avoiding loving neighbors or helping those in need. Jesus lesson is for everyone, including you and me.

CELEBRATING CHURCH

A reflection from a homily by Bishop Thomas of Villanova

We all want to live faithful and holy lives. We are told we should do this by listening carefully to the messages we hear in church and to learn to treat all we deal with as holy to God, including our churches and their altars and things we use in worship. But notice that we are the ones who make churches, and all other things holy, because God lives and works, and consecrates every-thing to service and love, in us. “The temple of God is holy and you are that temple.” So when we celebrate a special church we celebrate ourselves as the temples who make it holy by our holy lives.

God is to be worshiped in physical things. Yet is any physical thing so wonderful as the universe? And is it as wonderful as God’s image in us? When Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem he prayed: “The heaven of heavens can’t contain you, so how much less this house that I have built?” But every person is a worthier temple than was Solomon’s, or even the universe is! St. Paul exclaims: “Don’t you know you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”

As God walks in the temple you are, you want nothing to be unworthy of God’s love. God says, “Be holy because I, the Lord, your God, am holy!” Let your heart be holy, let your speech be holy, let your living be holy. Let there be no envy or worldliness or impurity or disordered act be found in God’s temple that you are. Isn’t it true that you have already consecrated yourselves to God? You only need to act out this truth!

CELEBRATING THE LATERAN BASILICA

From The Splendor of the Church by Fr. Henri de Lubac

The mystery of the Church is our own mystery. It is in the church that we encounter God and that he looks upon us in love and are made blessed. The Church is the continual miracle that announces to God's people the Savior's coming. St. Clement of Alexandria said, "Just as the will of God is an act called the world so the intention of God is the salvation of all peoples and is called the Church". For the elect, salvation consists in being welcomed into the heart of the Church, the nuptials of the Lamb, as Scripture calls them.

Holy Church has two lives, one in time and the other in eternity. We must always keep a firm hold on the continuity of the One Church through the diversity of her states. Prior to the incarnation she had become a bride and that remains true to a certain extent until the end of time. God's mystical marriage with us needs the final Parousia for its fulfillment.

When we celebrate the consecration of the Lateran Basilica we view the papal office in the light of the reality that is the earthy-heavenly Church and all the ups and downs that befall it due to human weakness as well as human strength. We are reminded that the strength which truly counts is divine and that before the Church becomes identical with the heavenly Jerusalem much more dross will have to be skimmed off and much transmutation of base metal into precious will be necessary. Much is transitory but God makes of it a providential instrument and promise of the communion that is to come. That is true for each of us as well.

CAST YOUR CARES UPON THE LORD

A reflection taken from a homily by St. Pope Leo

St. Paul urges us to put off our old self with its actions and be renewed daily through a holy way of life. We are a Temple of God and need to be watchful that our hearts aren't unworthy. People are quick to repair their homes when they are damaged by wind or rain since they don't serve us well if we fail to take care of them. God works steadily to renew us but insists on our cooperation. It is a kind of disobedience to grace if we separate ourselves from the one without whom we cannot live well.

A believer hasn't any doubt that divine providence is at work always and everywhere. We know the outcome of human affairs depends on God's power and love. We know everything is ordered toward merciful judgment by our God. None the less, things don't always work out as we hope and sometimes the cause of the wicked seems to triumph. It is only too likely that even generous believers get disturbed and utter false complaints about God's care. Few have the solid strength needed to avoid being shaken by shifts of circumstance. And prosperity as well as adversity may lead a believer astray.

We have to keep on our toes to deal rightly with the wounds we receive because of our human weakness. It calls for unshakable faith and trust in our God's love. Who can have such a faith or trust without help. Where can we turn when we are shaken? What did you do when this happened to you? You trusted God & experienced God's help. God was with you. Never forget that.

LEARNING FROM THE FAITH OF OTHERS

A reflection from a letter of St. Pope John XXIII

St. Martin was a bishop and a zealous pastor. He can well be imitated in the practice of charity. He was also, and first of all, a monk. One might say that the only reason he was such a marvelous doer of charitable deeds was that he was first of all a person of prayer. From this point of view, he has another great lesson to give Christians today.

Martin was eager for solitude and union with God. He never turned his mind from prayer, as his first biographer tells us. When elected bishop he refused to give up the way of life proper to a monk. Note that his principle means of evangelizing was by founding churches and monasteries where there were as yet no Christians. The monks brought immense benefit to the country people, clearing land and make it good farm land. Monastic life shows people what they can do to help one another and do it out of love.

One of the beauties of monastic life is its way of drawing others to mutual help and love. The method of St. Martin has been confirmed by many centuries of experience. He showed what wonders a monastery can work both spiritually and practically, and show how Christian faith can transform a society's life and ways. St. Martin was a model bishop, and a model monk and a model pastor, and he instilled in the society within which he lived a new spirit, both for serving God and for helping one another in love. We are called to do the same service to our society and time and place.