

THIRTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINAR TIME

- Sun. Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 1 **GOD LOVES & BLESSES OUR ORDINARY LIFE**
A reflection by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller
- Mon. Monday in the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time
2 **ARE WE AWAKE TO GOD'S PRESENCE WITHIN US?**
A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Augustine
- Tues. Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle
3 **THE APOSTOLATE THAT SHARES HOPE AND LOVE**
A reflection adapted from Centuries on Charity
by St. Maximus the Confessor
- Wed. INDEPENDENCE DAY
4 **WHAT MAKES INDEPENDENCE DAY SACRED**
Adapted from a 1916 essay by James Cardinal Gibbons
- Thurs. Thursday in the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time
5 **TRUST IN THE LORD ALWAYS & EVERYWHERE**
A reflection adapted from a sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus
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6 **OBEDIENCE, HOLINESS AND LOVE**
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A reflection developed from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

GOD LOVES & BLESSES OUR ORDINARY LIFE

A reflection by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmüller

In a passage from the opening chapters of the Book of Wisdom we are told that God doesn't rejoice in the destruction of the living. The Gospels make this even clearer by showing us the tender and determined way Jesus went about restoring life and health under seemingly impossible circumstances. Think of this Sunday's Gospel reading.

We find Jesus claiming needy and sick people as his own. He went to the sick daughter of a synagogue official and in the process healed a woman who had been sick for many years. The woman had a long-continuing hemorrhage and had come and touched him without saying anything. But Jesus was aware that power had gone out from him and so looked for her until she identified herself. This required that he ignore or overcome several customs and taboos in a way we could easily miss. You see, what she did, and what he did to the little girl, made him ceremonially "unclean". That meant he wasn't supposed to enter a synagogue or the Temple or to pray liturgically or publicly. It wasn't his purpose to fly in the face of tradition or Mosaic Law, he simply acted lovingly and spontaneously to help two women, and he was willing to defend what he did.

When the hemorrhaging woman touched him, she made him "unclean". When he touched the body of the dead girl he made himself "unclean". Twice over he became "unclean" in less than half an hour. That was why the woman was afraid when Jesus looked around to identify her. She had made a holy man "unclean" and was afraid of what would happen when Jesus drew public attention to it. But notice that Jesus didn't criticize her or "correct" her. He praised her faith! That, he said, was what cured her rather than merely touching his clothes.

Struggling against illness and working to get better are good actions. The Lord was happy to be involved in them. He is still pleased to be involved in our like efforts. We need to believe in the power of miracles.

Notice that as soon as Jesus raised the little girl to life he told her parents to give her something to eat. He thought of her human needs. Notice too, that once he had raised the girl he wanted people to settle down and go on helping each other in their regular family life. Jesus was blessing our ordinary human existence. He was making it possible for two individuals to enjoy the normal joys of life. Recall what the Book of Wisdom tells us. God loves life, ordinary life, and wants the creatures of his world to be healthy and wholesome.

To enjoy life we have to share, and Jesus shows us unexpected ways of doing that. A selfish person isn't a happy one. Such a person lacks a quality that is part of "wholeness" and of belonging to the human family, as well as a particular family. This is essential to being one of God's People. Don't miss you opportunities to do this.

ARE WE AWAKE TO GOD'S PRESENCE WITHIN US?

A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Augustine

The Gospels have been given us so we will not let our faith lie dormant, so to speak. The Risen Lord Jesus never has to sleep, but even while he was with us and did sleep his bond with the Heavenly Father was always "awake". Recall the Gospel story of a time when Jesus was with his disciples in a boat and a storm came up. The disciples panicked and woke him up to save them. Where, he asked them, is your faith? When a person's faith is dormant, so to speak, it is as if Jesus were asleep in your hearts—for he always lives within you and gives you the gift of faith.

Think of that Gospel story as one about your own life. You are confronted by many challenges and even troubles and only by turning to Jesus can you overcome them. Each of us, we believe, is a temple of God. Our hearts, though are like boats caught in a storm. It can't harm us as long as we cling to Jesus. Remember he is the source of every good we need and is always with us.

If you have to listen to abuse you are in a kind of storm. When you react by getting angry you seem to be on the point of drowning in it. Your heart is in danger. You hear yourself insulted or belittled and you want to retaliate. But if you indulge in revenge and counter insults you are shipwrecked. That can only happen if Jesus within you is treated as though he were asleep. You forget his presence. Remember him and join him in keeping watch within yourself.

Pay attention to what he says in such circumstances. What did you want? You thought you wanted to get back at the person who hurt you? Have you forgotten how Jesus prayed when being crucified? "*Father, forgive them because they don't know what they are doing!*" Jesus had no room for revenge-seeking in his heart. So call him to mind. To do this is to remember his words and recall his commands. Then you will think: What am I doing, seeking revenge? What business have I to hurt this person or threaten or give in to rage? Do I really want to do what Christ never did?

Jesus says to us: "*Give and it shall be given you; forgive and you will be forgiven.*" His words can restore peace to your heart. In effect, Jesus has rebuked the storm and all is calm again. And this should be our way of reacting to any temptation. When you feel temptation's disturbance then you must turn to Jesus and awaken your heart to his presence. Don't even the winds and the sea obey him? Can't we imitate the winds and the sea in obeying the words of our Christ?

See what you can do when you are inwardly disturbed. Perhaps you can be the mouth through which Jesus speaks to others who are similarly disturbed. Never let despair reign within your mind or heart. With Jesus we can pass through every sort of turmoil and reach our heavenly home and its peace. Leave the blustering and carrying on behind you and rest in Jesus' loving presence and his guiding and calming words. We have a sure refuge, an ever-present help in times of distress. Turn to Him.

THE APOSTOLATE THAT SHARES HOPE AND LOVE

**A reflection adapted from Centuries on Charity by
St. Maximus the Confessor**

The apostle we know as “saint” Thomas once tried to shut himself away from Christ and Christ’s love by refusing to believe he had risen. How did Christ react to this refusal? How do we act when we encounter such refusals? We are commanded to do all we can to love everyone. If you aren’t yet able to do that, then can you manage not to hate anyone? What makes us able to do such things, and for people who knowing refuse what we would share with them? Think of St. Thomas.

I think that the precondition for loving as Christ loves is detachment from the things of the world. To love everyone, and with all your strength, you have to hope only in God. What else can you hope in? The other apostles weren’t able to share their joy in the resurrection of Christ with a brother apostle, Thomas. He was afraid to hope fully and only in Christ. But Christ never shut Thomas out of his love. We are reminded today that we are called to do likewise. Christ did it by showing Thomas that he could hope actually for what he thought he couldn’t.

Christ’s friends are not universally loved, and, unfortunately, they don’t always love universally. Those who least love Christ’s friends are those who love the world. That means putting your hope in what the world has to give. One can’t love all because others are in competition with you for the world’s goods in which you hope. Christ’s friends cease to put their hope in the world and its goods and put all their hope in Christ’s love. He puts hope in them and so is able to share his love with them. He loves perfectly, and right to the end! We have to learn to persevere in this sort of hope so we can love as Christ does.

Christ loved Thomas right to the uttermost end. His goal was simply to open Thomas to that love. He had to lead him to trust in him, and in God’s loving mercy shown through him, and he had to do it in a way Thomas couldn’t deny. He knew the way and he loved Thomas so as to reorient his hopes.

A faithful friend can be many things. A friend can be a protector, a sympathetic advisor, a practical helper, and, most of all, can be one who loves you unselfishly and is deeply committed to you and your well-being. Christ found a way to show this to Thomas and so open him to faith and the loving that flows from faith. We are called to do the same for one another when anyone gets trapped by shutting the door to hope and love.

Many people have said many things about love. But we can only find the whole truth in Christ. People can only see this truth through us and our Christ-like love. Only those who cling to Christ have true love itself as their teacher. We see what that means in the story of Christ’s coming to the unbelieving Thomas.

Here we see the meaning of St. Paul’s saying: *“If I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge, but don’t have love, I am nothing”*. Whoever has love has God because God is love. Love never shuts the door on anyone but always reaches out to help and to heal and to share hope and even joy.

WHAT MAKES INDEPENDENCE DAY SACRED

A reflection adapted from a 1916 essay by James Cardinal Gibbons

The love of one's people and country is a fundamental sentiment found everywhere in our world. It existed before the Christian Revelation but has been elevated and perfected by Christ's message and example. This love inspires individuals even to the giving of their lives, and Christian patriotism can make no greater sacrifice than this. But it can purify and elevate patriotism and the sacrifices it demands; it can make it nobler and inspire it to higher ideals of love and fellowship.

The Christian ideal is fundamentally one of universal charity. This was shown in a new way to the world by Christ's love. Christ came to lead all to become a single family in God and to treat all with an equal concern and personal care. This is founded on the fact that all human persons are brothers and sister to one another in God. Loving our country and loving all people are not incompatible. They are drawn together when we learn to make our country an example of equal respect and care for all citizens.

It is our ideal that even in the political order the United States should offer to the world an example of mutual concern and support that is extended to all Americans equally and without being limited because of any of the differences distinguishing particular groups. In the religious order we proclaim the universality and unity of the Church, and find it difficult to preserve, and this is to have its analogue in the political and civil order by a new kind of national unity.

Think of the manifold blessings which our nation has brought to so many of its citizens. It must strive to bring them to all. All must experience the same respect and honor and find the same opportunities for advancement available to them. Americans have reason to be proud if this is made possible for all of the millions of persons whom it makes fellow citizens and brothers and sisters.

The people of these United States are very proud of their liberty, and aware that it is not something that can be taken for granted. Eternal vigilance, we say, is the price of liberty. Indeed, we have had to open the doors to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness just once but many times. When we gained our liberty in the Revolutionary War our people were not united and many opposed the revolution or left our country because of it. Like things happened in other wars, and in the civil war especially. They continue to happen. Unity and liberty and inner freedom to follow Christ by love and respect for all must continually be won.

This shouldn't surprise us; it is true for the Church as well as civil societies. We must strive to live as Christ lived without becoming despondent because we see political stagnation or find some seeking to act against the universal equality before the law that is essential to our nation and its ideals. Let us be hopeful and trust in Divine Guidance, let us be cheerful even in dark times, let us be strong and most persevering. Reflect on the ordeals through which our country has already passed, triumphantly. We will, by God's grace, triumph again and again as we strive to make our civic friendship more like the universal and unqualified love of God shown us in Jesus Christ. This too requires eternal vigilance. It is the price of living by the ideals of Christian faith and hope.

HOPE IN THE LORD AT EVERY MOMENT & EVERYWHERE

A reflection adapted from a sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus

Every Gospel passage can be most helpful both in coping with the trials of our present life in Christ and transforming us so we will be capable of rejoicing in living the life to come. That means every part of the Gospel offers us hope. This is made very clear by the readings at the Eucharist, especially on Sundays. They teach us that we needn't seek special place or times so that the Lord can help us; we can find him at every moment and in every circumstance.

Recall the story of the synagogue official whose daughter was dying. He came to Jesus and did homage and pleaded with him to come and lay his hand on the girl so she would get well and live. Now compare this person with the centurion who simply sent word to Jesus and asked only that he give the needed command to heal his slave. No special gesture or special coming of Christ is needed, at least not by God or his Christ. When we seek some special sign of Christ's presence we are confessing only the weakness of our faith.

Whenever we turn our heart and mind to Jesus we are in his presence. Jesus often tried to teach people this. There is no need to move God to a special place or have God do some special thing in order to obtain God's grace and healing. One needs only to believe that God is everywhere present, and in the whole of his being. We need only believe that God can do all things, effortlessly and by a simple word of command. Indeed, the Lord wants to gift us with such faith.

One way of doing it is through Gospel stories. Think of the times when Jesus put death to flight by a word. He didn't need to touch the dead body, though he often did when it was there before him. God gives life itself by a mere command and without the need of anything special by way of work or word.

Probably the synagogue official who pleaded for his daughter thought that since she had not yet grown cold the soul was still there and if Jesus came right away he could prevent it from departing from her body. In his ignorance the man thought Christ couldn't raise his daughter unless he touched her. But what is death to the creator of life? It is a kind of falling asleep to this world only. So when Jesus did come he told those mourning that the girl was asleep only. God can restore life and life-giving warmth to limbs that have died more quickly than we can warm our limbs by rubbing them.

Times and spaces place no limitations on God or God's exercise of power. You may want many things from God. You think you don't receive them because God hasn't come to a special place or done a special sign. Perhaps, however, God is telling you that what you want isn't appropriate now. Let your faith itself cast off its limitations. Without doubting, ask God for what you need and don't doubt that God will give it to you if it is really useful—for this life and the life to come. Ask, that is, in unqualified trust in God's love. You will receive whatever is for your genuine good in this life or in the next.

OBEDIENCE, HOLINESS AND LOVE

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

The Gospel endeavors to describe how believers get conformed to Jesus. In the first place, this involves obedience to Jesus' commands. The New Covenant, ratified by the blood of Christ, entails a new law. John, for instance, doesn't mention the institution of the Eucharist as the mystery of the New Covenant, probably because it was already so well-known, but recalls the command of mutual love modelled by Christ's washing of his disciples' feet. Jesus gives us the example of laying down his life for his friends and that of serving others in the lowliest and most ordinary ways by washing others' dirty feet.

Obedience to these commands brings about an interior conformity, an inward likeness to Jesus—in our attitudes and values—and so we are united to Jesus the way a branch is united with the vine it grows on. We are to inhabit Jesus' spiritual world. We are to make Jesus' motivations our motivations. These are the profound origins of Jesus' love.

You can perhaps see that we will have to take literally some things that we tend to look on as only symbolic. We have to live in Jesus, literally, and so live in the Father, literally, and this is possible by the power of the Spirit, literally. Thus, as disciples we become dwelling places, temples, for God—Father, Son and Spirit. The result is becoming holy, as Jesus is holy. That's the goal.

That holiness flowers in our love for one another, and for everyone. God's holiness is God's innermost reality. Jesus commands us, "*Be holy as your Heavenly Father is holy!*" Do we take that literally? Better, can we dare to take that literally? If we do, dwelling in the Father and Son and Spirit becomes a missionary compulsion. We have to share what God has shown and given us. We have to do it in any way our circumstances allow.

Holiness causes us to seek communion. The communion of believers with one another springs from this shared divine and Trinitarian holiness. It is expressed in a communitary life that seeks acted out unity. Unity becomes a vivid testimony of the love that unites Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That love draws the world to faith and to putting all hope in God. We see what God invites us to hope for and we want it. But we don't want it just for ourselves but for the entire human world. We are sharing the mission Jesus received from the Heavenly Father because we are one with and in Jesus. This is the fruit of obedience flowering in holiness and engendering love.

BEARING CHRIST FOR OTHERS

A reflection taken from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Mary bore only one Son. In heaven he is the only-begotten of the Father and on earth the only-begotten of his mother. She is the only virgin-mother and glories in having borne the only-begotten of the Father and embracing all the members of her son. She is, then, called the mother of all in whom she recognizes Christ brought to full stature, or in whom she knows he is growing steadily. Mary consummated the vocation Eve could not, and so became mother of all the living. Like the Church of which she is a type Mary is the mother of all those reborn to life and so is the mother of life.

The one Mary brought forth brought all those who live to new life. So the Blessed Mother of Christ, knowing that she is the mother of all Christians by reason of this mystery, shows herself a mother by her care and loving attention. Her womb carried a child only once, yet it remains ever fruitful and never ceases to bring forth the fruits of motherly compassion.

If Paul, a servant of Christ, gives birth to children again and again by care and heartfelt tenderness, and does this until Christ is formed in them, how much more is this true of the mother of Christ? Paul begot children by preaching the word of truth through which they were born again. Mary, in a manner far more godlike, begets them by giving birth to the Word himself in them. We praise Paul's ministry of preaching but admire even more the mystery of generation in Mary.

All of us are Mary's children and what we see in our mother we long to do in a way fitted to our lowliness. We, like Paul, have ministries of bringing others to birth in Christ, not only by our words but especially by the example of compassion love we see in our own and Christ's mother. We do this by the miracle of God's grace, just as did our mother, Mary. We become, like her, instruments by which God brings Christ to birth in all those chosen to belong to the Church.

The Church too is a mother, and one with innumerable children. But she would have no children if God's grace didn't make it possible for Christ to grow within us and to show forth in his personal and his life of love the beauty which the Heavenly Father seeks to share with and through us. Who is more beautiful than Christ Our Lord? Who comes after him in beauty except Mary, his mother and ours? Who can show forth that beauty now that Christ and his mother are both gone from us to heaven? We are given that call and responsibility. We do it in the shadow of her love and imitating her example. As she helps us so we help one another.

In God we are all drawn together into the one Christ, who is totally God's and makes us too one with God, one and Triune. What is our joy but to see Christ grown and draw more and more of God's creatures into the love that is God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit? Our mother shares with us her vocation of bearing Christ so that others might become Christ's members. Each day brings us new opportunities, that we may glorify our God.