

# **FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

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- Sun.    **The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
July 15   **OUR CALL TO EVANGELIZE**  
          A reflection from Announcing the Gospel by Bl. Pope Paul VI
- Mon.    **Monday of the 15<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
16        **WHY NOT BELIEVE AND LIVE IN JESUS?**  
          From Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini
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# **OUR CALL TO EVANGELIZE**

## **A reflection from Announcing the Gospel by Bl. Pope Paul VI**

As the herald of the Gospel the Church begins its task by evangelizing itself. The Church is a fellowship made up of believers. This means it is a fellowship of living and shared hope. It is also a fellowship of familial love. It needs to hear the heart of its faith continually proclaimed. It needs to recall the grounds of its hope. This all comes through the new commandment of love. The Church is the People of God, living in the world and frequently tempted by false gods. So we, as the Church, need to be reminded of God's mighty deeds and their call to conversion. We need to hear the Lord's call anew. We need to be gathered together again into unity. The Church always needs to listen to the Gospel message. The only way it can retain vigor and zeal and discover in itself the power to proclaim Christ's message is through this listening. The only way for the Church to evangelize others is by evangelizing itself and being continually converted and renewed.

We know the Church is, so to speak, the depository of the Good News. This news has to be made known to the entire human race. The promises of the New Covenant are already realized in Jesus the Christ. They have been entrusted to us. We have the teachings of our Lord and the apostles. We have the Word of Life. We have the well-spring of God's grace and loving kindness. We have the way of salvation. This is a life-giving and most precious heritage. We can't hide all this in the ground as one who receives a talent but is afraid to use it. It is only insofar as it is evangelized that the Church can be sent out to preach. It sends out evangelists to continue the work which brought its members of God. It puts the word of salvation into our mouths. We aren't commissioned to spread personal theories but the Gospel of Christ. The Church is a steward of its message. We can only be good stewards if we pass on what we have received.

The Church owes its origin to the preaching of the Good New by Jesus, and then by the Twelve. The Church was founded as a kind of connatural result of the labors of Jesus and the apostles. Recall what we hear in the Acts of the Apostles: "*Those who accepted Peter's word were baptized and that day about three thousand persons joined the community; daily the Lord added to their number...*". Jesus has returned to the Father in glory but the Church remains in the world as a sign of his continued presence; though the Lord has gone away He is still with us and in our midst. We are to live and work as continuing and extending that presence.

A Christian community can't be shut in upon itself but must feed on the Lord's teachings. This comes through the Breaking of the Bread. The mission of evangelizing is that of the entire Church and each individual member. The labor and prayer and love of each is important for the fulfillment of the task given the whole. We start with fervent prayer, then we listen to the word and then we continue by loving those we live with, even as we reach out to others. We do this in imitation of Jesus. This is God's good gift to each and all of us. Let us open our hearts and lives to receive and live it.

## **WHY NOT BELIEVE AND LIVE IN JESUS?**

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Public opinion is generally favorable to the figure of Jesus. Everyone knows, at least vaguely, the nobility of his message, his preference for the poor and humble, the way his life matches his words, and this from the simplicity of the stable in Bethlehem to the drama of the cross. If you don't limit yourself to vague recollections of catechism classes but read and re-read the Gospels themselves, you meet an unforgettable person. He utters strong and profound words on some of life's most important problems, and beyond this, He reaches out to every man and woman in the world, from the greatest to the least. He does it with an impressive authority, tenderness and clarity.

A careful reading of the Gospels, moreover, obliges us to go even further. Through many words and many incidents Jesus openly allows us to grasp that special intensity with which he sees and lives his existence as one among others. And all this, we learn, flows from a profound relationship with God the Heavenly Father, who is his father in a very intimate way. More, he tells us this relationship can be ours as well.

Jesus said stupendous things about the love of his merciful and exacting Father in Heaven! Jesus proclaimed that he wanted nothing more intensely than to do what this Father wills. In the terrible moments of agony in Gethsemane Jesus asks the Father to give him courage to give his all, his entire life, for the salvation of our race. Dying on the cross Jesus entrusted his life to the Heavenly Father and waited for the resurrection and the fullness of life and joy, but only as the Father might will to give all this to him.

Throughout his entire human life, Jesus revealed the mysterious unity existing between him and the Heavenly Father. Does this, and all the rest, provide us with good reasons to entrust ourselves to this honest, wise and generous human being—rather in the way he entrusted himself to the Father in Heaven? He was able to heal the sick, and even to raise the dead!

Why shouldn't we believe that the totally human life Jesus lived among us reveals the designs—the longings and projects—of God for all of us? Why should anyone hesitate to believe that God, in immense love, has come among us in Jesus and genuinely lived our life with us here on this earth?

Then why hesitate to believe that this God calls you to live forever with Him and the Risen Jesus? And if we believe it, why not live it day by day so that others may come to share that faith? Think of the kind of life Jesus lived. We can show that such a life is one every human person can live and that living in this way transforms us, personally, and transforms our world.

# **WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE IN THE SPIRIT**

A reflection from Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus of Lyon

Jesus told his disciples: “*Go and teach all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” When he said this, he gave all of us the power of giving new life in God to people everywhere. God had promised through the prophets that in the last days he would pour out the Spirit on his servants, both men and women, and that they would prophesy. To prophesy in the Spirit is to proclaim a new hope and the life that fulfills it.

When the Son of God became the Son of Man the Spirit descended upon him, became—as it were—accustomed to dwelling with the human race. The Spirit lives in us human beings and inhabits God’s creation. More, the Spirit accomplishes the Heavenly Father’s will by cleansing us from sin and giving us new life in Christ. Luke describes this as happening at Pentecost. Symbolically, people of every language joined in singing one song of praise to God and those who had been scattered and divided were shown the path to unity.

The Lord had promised to send the Spirit, calling it the Advocate, in order to prepare us all to be an offering to God. We had been like so much dry flour which needed to be moistened so it could be a single loaf of bread to feed and thus give new life to all. The Spirit brought us a dew of grace to make us one in Christ and so made unity for our entire race possible. We were all like so many trees without the water needed for them to bear fruit. That is symbolized, and made real, by baptism. It liberates and changes us so we become One Body in the One Spirit. And what has been given us we are to share, under the Spirit, with others.

We have received what Scripture calls the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of God. This Spirit came down on the Lord Jesus and he, in turn, has given it to the Church. He has sent the Advocate from Heaven and into the world, for into it had fallen the devil “like lightning”, as Jesus put it. Lightning could scorch us and make us again unfruitful. That is what the devil accuses us all of being. But we have an Advocate that realizes truth in us.

The Lord has had pity on us all. We were like persons who had fallen into the hands of robbers and he has rescued us, bound up our wounds and left what is needed to pay for our care. He left two coins bearing God’s own image and the inscription of the Heavenly Father’s name. Through the Spirit those images of the Father and the Son are given us. We are to live in the image of Father and Son as having come to us in the Spirit. How does that image reveal itself? It does this by love—the love of the Father and the love of the Son lived and revealed in Jesus. The coin is now given to us as well. We must use it by loving others as Jesus has loved us.

## **DEATH “IN THE SPIRIT”**

Developed from Catechetical Instructions by St. Cyril of Jerusalem

The Holy Spirit is called Paraclete, which means Comforter, because the Spirit brings consolation and encouragement to help us in our weakness. When do we recognize this weakness more than in the presence of death? That is indeed a moment when we don't quite know how to pray. Then “*the Spirit itself prays to God for us through inarticulate sighs*”.

Think of a martyr facing death. For Christ's sake they, like many of us, face injustice and bad treatment and perhaps shame at their lack of strength or courage, and they often don't really know what to pray. This is likewise true for those of us who die an ordinary death.

When martyrdom is at hand and there are torments on every side—fire or the sword or wild beasts or a deep pit—then the Holy Spirit whispers softly, “*Wait for the Lord! What is happening to you now is a small matter and what will be given you is great!*” We, like the martyrs, need to hear these words. After suffering for a short time won't we be with the angels for all eternity? There is no comparison between the sufferings of this present time and the glory which shall be revealed to us. The Spirit leads us to remember all these truths so we can hold all we suffer in contempt.

We will all face death, and when it comes we can face it in a way that will give witness to the love of God and the presence of the Spirit just as martyrdom does. Do you want proof? The Lord said to his disciples: “*When they bring you before the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, don't worry about what to say. The Holy Spirit will teach you what to say*”. That is true for anyone who faces a trial, whether it be death or something else. Only through the Holy Spirit is it possible to bear witness to Christ by dying. If no one can say “*Jesus is Lord!*” except through the Holy Spirit, how could any of us give our very life into God's hands except through the Spirit?

Great is the Holy Spirit and almighty and wonderful in gifts and graces. Think of how many there are sitting here listening to me. In each of you the Spirit is acting. Always the Spirit does what is best for the individual concerned. Now think of how many Christians there are in your diocese. Think of how many there are in your entire country. Let your thoughts expand to all countries and to the entire world. Everywhere there are believers and all of them must one day face death. Who is the protector who will teach and comfort them?

Think of the graces people receive. Some are virgins, some are chaste, some are generous to the poor, some live voluntary poverty. Some have the gift of driving out demons, and all the gift of giving themselves into the hands of our God. When the Spirit comes, Jesus said, I will be glorified for the Spirit will make my message known everywhere and at every moment in life. The Spirit led us to baptism and to seek to love others even as Jesus loves them. The Spirit leads all who die in Christ into the Kingdom of Heaven. The Spirit is leading us to imagine ourselves with them in that Kingdom. There the Spirit will teach us the song that is eternal joy and praise. Our dead sing it already. In our small way, let us join our voices to theirs. The Spirit is leading us to do this very thing even now.

# **HOW MARVELOUS IT IS TO HOPE IN THE LORD**

**Developed from a homily by St. John Chrysostom**

**We have been told that “*God foreordained that those he had chosen should be conformed to the likeness of his Son*”. St. Paul says this and challenges us to notice what a sublime thing it is. What God’s only Son is by nature we are to become by grace! To underline this St. Paul adds that God wills that his firstborn be one of many brothers and sisters. That’s who we are. If we have received such wondrous gifts how can we doubt about our future? All that we have received, Paul notes, was ordained by God from before the beginning of the world. From eternity God has loved us and chosen us. What should we fear?**

**We know God has called us since he has justified us through the baptism of regeneration. But those God justifies are also glorified! This is assured to us because God has made us his own children through grace. Grace is gift and if God is determined to give us such wondrous gifts how can we doubt? It is as though God had said: Let me hear no more about dangers or about being surrounded by plotters. Even those who choose to doubt about the things to come can’t deny the graces already given. God’s love brings about graces and justification and will bring about glory.**

**God made use of his own seemingly disastrous sufferings to free and save our entire race. Did the scourging, the cross, the bonds and the shame inflicted on Jesus prevent the triumph of God’s love in him? If God is with us who can be against us? No human being, no devil, nothing at all can withstand those who observe and live by God’s law. If people take away our money they only obtain a reward for us. If people speak ill of us the slander only brings glory upon us. If someone inflicts hunger on us we rejoice because our reward will be the greater. If someone kills you they only prepare you for a martyr’s crown. What should we fear when everything works for our good and glory?**

**Having recalled all this, Paul goes on to speak of the greatest sign of God’s love for us—Jesus’ crucifixion, the sacrifice of God’s own Son. God has not only justified us and glorified us. God has conformed us to the likeness of his Son. Is it possible that one who didn’t even spare his own son in order to love us will not give us all we need to join his Son in glory and joy? Reflect on the goodness of the One who didn’t even spare his Son but gave him up and gave him up for everyone—the worthless and the ungrateful, the hostile and blasphemous included. How then can our God fail to give us everything we truly need? If God has done so much for us, why should we fail to trust God? Why worry about what we have or haven’t got? We have our God for our possession! That is all we need!**

# THE ONE THING NECESSARY

## A reflection from a homily by St. Augustine

***“My command to you is to love one another.”*** That is what the Lord says to us. This is the fruit we are asked to bear. We bear it by love. ***“I have chosen you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last”***. And after he says this the Lord adds, ***“so that the Father may give you whatever you ask in my name”***. This means that the Father will readily grant our requests provided that we love one another as Jesus loves us. But surely this love is God’s own gift to us.

God chose us while we were lacking in the fruit that is love. Remember that it was God who chose us and not we who chose God. God has made it possible for us to bear fruit. In other words, God has made it possible for us to love one another. We can never hope to bear such fruit unless God helps us with grace—just as a branch can’t bear fruit unless it forms part of a living vine.

What, then, is our fruit? It is love. St. Paul describes it as springing from a pure heart and a sincere faith. Such is the source of our love for one another, the source of our love for God. Only if we love God can our love for one another be true love. If we love God then we shall also love our neighbor as ourselves. Anyone who has no love for God has none for self or others.

On keeping the twofold precept of charity—for God and for neighbor—depends the keeping of the whole of the law and the prophets. This love is the fruit the Lord has in mind when he says to us: ***“My command to you is to love one another”***. That is why the apostle Paul, contrasting the fruits of the Spirit with the works of the flesh, begins by saying: ***“The fruit of the Spirit is love”***. Then Paul enumerates all the rest, as though they flowed from love and looked to love as their source. What are they? They are joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control.

Who can truly rejoice without loving some good in which they seek their joy? Who can experience true peace except by being at peace with their beloved? Who will have the patience to persevere in doing good unless constantly urged on by love’s promptings? Who will show kindness without loving those they set out to benefit? Who will be good if not made so by loving? Whose faith will profit them if that faith doesn’t work through love?

How wise our Good Master was when he so persistently recommended love to us as the one thing necessary! It is a treasure without which all other good things and virtues avail us not at all. They can’t be had except in company with love. With the other good qualities listed, it is love that makes us perfect in virtue.

We do we seek perfect virtue? We would give ourselves to our Beloved in as perfect a condition as possible. We want to return God’s gift to us, the gift which we are, in its most perfect condition and development. Begin always from love. When God gave us this gift God gave us all else besides. We have only to claim those gifts by using them to love.

## **OUR LADY'S UNNOTICED GIFTS**

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

**“*Hail, Mary, full of grace*”, said the angel. He said to a virgin but her fullness of grace didn't consist only in her virginity. Not everyone receives the gift of remaining a virgin and the Lord shows us in Mary that He has more than one blessing. Even if one has not preserved virginity one can still come to Mary and plead with her that the Lord may share with us her other gifts.**

**The angel came to a most humble young woman of Nazareth and her beauty was the result of her humility as much as of her virginity. Many are virgins but not all are humble and their virginity will count for nothing if they don't learn humility. We come to Mary as Abraham's servant came to Rebecca when he was seeking a wife for Isaac. He came to her at a well and found her drawing water. When he asked her for a drink, without hesitation she lowered her jar and shared her water with him, and then gave water to his beasts as well. She was most humble and delighted to serve even in lowly ways.**

**Mary, if I come to you and ask you for a drink will you share with me that humility which was among your principle beauties and adornments? Give me to drink from the water which gives strength to serve and to love. Give me the water of life which comes to us from the fruit of your womb. For you are not only a virgin, you are not only humble, but you are also fruitful.**

**God always looks upon the humble with love and lifts them up by many graces to rejoice with him and in his Kingdom. Lift me up, Lord, and give me the strength I need not only to be humble but to love and serve as did your lowly handmaiden. The water that Mary draws has been given her by the Son after he turned it into wine. That is what happens when humility is joined to the strength that is from God and that flows forth to give joy to every human heart that will receive it. You, O Lord, have invited us to your very own wedding banquet as you join yourself with our race and take on all that comes with our humanity—including weakness and lowliness. You changed these seemingly insignificant things into strength and joy at the prayer of your servant, virgin and mother.**

**The fruitfulness of Mary, the unexpected and marvelous fruitfulness of one who was a virgin and knew no man, was made fruitful for the entire world when you made her virginal womb fruitful by the incarnation of you only Son. Who could be stronger than he? Who could lavish greater and more wondrous gifts on all who are lowly and give a “Yes” in response to every request?**

**Mary, lower your jar that I may drink! Let me drink of the blood of your Holy Son, our Lord Jesus. Let me draw strength from him that I too may be twice humble, because I was not strong enough to be like you as a virgin. It is in that humility that I answer with my “Yes” to the call by which you send me to love others even as you Son and our brother has loved them. Let the water of the Holy Spirit's grace cause me to conceive in my heart the Lord Jesus and let me share the water of life that flows from him even as you do. O Virgin, humble and fruitful may I too become fruitful by imitating your humility and turning with you to God so my every moment shall be a “Yes”. Let all be done in me according to your will!**