

## **SEVENTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

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- Sun.     **The Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
July 29   **SEEING GOD BY FAITH**  
          A reflection from a homily by St. Augustine
- Mon.     **Monday of the 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
30       **HOW DO WE SET OUT TO MULTIPLY GOOD THINGS?**  
          A reflection from a sermon by Fr. Johannes Hoffmeister
- Tues.    **A Memorial of St. Ignatius of Loyola**  
31       **THE APOSTOLATE IS CHRISTIAN LIVING**  
          A reflection from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII
- Wed.     **A Memorial of St. Alphonsus Liguori**  
Aug. 1    **ABOVE ALL TRUST IN JESUS, OUR REDEEMER**  
          A reflection from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII
- Thurs.   **Thursday of the 17<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time**  
2        **THE JOURNEY TO CONTEMPLATION**  
          From Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini
- Fri.     **Friday of the 17<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time**  
3        **GOD'S CALL, TO EACH AND TO ALL**  
          A reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman
- Sat.     **A Memorial of St. John Vianney**  
4        **WHAT LEADS PEOPLE TO CONVERSION?**  
          A reflection from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII

# SEEING GOD BY FAITH

## A reflection from a homily by St. Augustine

What we call the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ lead our minds through visible things to an experience of God. We know that God is not the sort of being who can be seen with eyes and yet we know that God creates and rules the entire universe. But the amazing artistry we discover in a tiny seed is actually found everywhere. We don't bother to reflect on this fact because it is always there. What we notice are events that aren't part of the ordinary course of nature. They are works that God has reserved for particular times and places to cause us amazement and dumbfound us so that we will open our minds to God's presence and care in all events and beauties.

Governing the entire universe is certainly a greater miracle than feeding a mere five thousand people with five loaves of bread. Yet no one marvels at that governance but everyone is amazed at the second. We marvel at what is extraordinary. Think of the fact that a few seeds bring forth an entire field of wheat. Just as God multiplies a few seeds to make this field of wheat, so Christ multiplies five loaves. Christ does what God does, but in a way that opens our eyes to what God is always doing. The eyes that are opened are those of faith. The five loaves Christ multiplied were like seeds and from them comes our faith. This is much greater than a wheat field, and much more extraordinary!

A miracle is recounted to us in a sensible way in order to stimulate our minds and to engage our efforts to understand whatever happens. It makes us marvel at the God we don't see by showing us works we can see. The process raises us to the level of faith. Purified by the experience of faith we long to behold God. We know we can't do this with our ordinary eyes but we couldn't recognize God's hand working in our ordinary world except by the gift of faith. From this gift comes an ability to see what eyes cannot see. Christ performed a miracle so that the multitude he feed could see what was happening. It called forth faith. It was recorded and is read to us to call for the same faith. Faith, moreover, does for us what ordinary eyes did for the multitude. But doesn't the Lord tell us: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe"?

The people whom Jesus had healed realized they had seen a sign. "*Surely, this must be a prophet*", they said. He was in fact the Lord of the prophets, the one who fulfills what *they* prophets had proclaimed, the one who sanctifies the prophets. He was also a prophet himself, and the one whom Moses had foretold: "*I will raise up for them a prophet like yourself*", God said to Moses. The Lord Jesus is that prophet. He is the Word of God, and without God's Word no prophet can prophesy. Yes, the Word of God is a prophet and is with the prophets. Think of the people to whom God gave the gift of hearing the prophets proclaim the divine word. Now think of the fact that God has given you the gift of hearing the word of the very Word of God, the prophet of prophets.

Faith should open our hearts to gratitude and thanksgiving just as it has opened our minds to believe. That very thanksgiving is a miracle of faith that God is working in you at this very moment. Do you see God in yourself? Believe and so see and so rejoice.

## **SETTING OUT TO MULTIPLY GOOD THINGS**

### **A reflection from a sermon by Fr. Johannes Hoffmeister**

In many ways the Lord gives food to all living things. But God does this by using creatures as ministers—e.g., sun and moon, rain and dew, human farmers and their labors. The same is true in the spiritual realm. Listen to St. Paul: “*I have planted, Apollos has watered, but it is God who gave the increase*”. The Lord Jesus received the heavenly bread of true teaching from the Heavenly Father, the apostles received it from him, and so on down to the present day and those who have fed us.

St. John the Evangelist tells us that Jesus gave thanks to the Heavenly Father before he broke the bread to feed the five thousand. Why did he do that? Christ could multiply bread without a word or a gesture. That’s what he did in creating the universe. In one way, Christ did this so that the crowd would know that he was not working or teaching in the name of some god other than the One True God. All that he did was done in fulfillment of the promises made by that One God to mankind through Moses and the prophets. But he had a second reason for giving thanks before multiplying the loaves. He was teaching that thanksgiving must be the beginning of our efforts to multiply good things we have. We should do this in order to do God’s work and make God’s purposes effective.

What is thanksgiving. It is an acknowledgement that all good things come to us from God. After giving thanks Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish to such an extent that they fed five thousand men without counting the women and children. All of them were fed most generously. We know that because five baskets of left-overs were collected; more bread and fish were left than had been blessed to begin with.

Now think of how many human activities are directed to multiplying good things! Think of what it means if we begin our work by thanking God! Do you expect to multiply your goods or anything you possess or want to possess without thanking God first? It doesn’t matter how much we have to begin with or even how much we want to end up with. We must always thank God. And when we have received a multiplication from God’s hands we must use these things with gratitude. We must begin with God and end with God and do all according to God’s will and word. That shows our gratitude.

# **THE APOSTOLATE IS CHRISTIAN LIVING**

## **A reflection from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII**

To Christ Jesus be the glory! The fact that the saints lived according to this maxim is one of the reasons why we admire them. And in whom do we admire this way of life more than in St. Ignatius of Loyola? It is vital that we pay careful attention to the example that St. Ignatius offers us today.

Perhaps the first thing he teaches us is not to be afraid for the Church. We say the Church of Christ is holy. This is true because the Lord sustains and guides it and not because of human efforts. It is Christ who makes the Church a fountain of life.

In some parts of the world the church is opposed or persecuted. This is at times due to the conduct of her members and not just to non-believers or anti-clericals. We have to turn to Christ when the Church is in trouble. There have been many such storms but they have always been followed by calm weather. One of the ways this is brought about is through the saints' examples of genuine Christian living.

St. Ignatius knew that all perfection is a result of the exercise of a genuinely Christian way of living. He saw that poverty and obedience, for example, are ways of living as Christ lived and paths we can walk to perfection. He wasn't talking about destitution when he spoke of poverty. It wasn't lack of good or wealth he had in mind but an indifference toward what is merely human and not godly. Ordinary good things are desirable only as they lead us to salvation. We don't love them but we love all the people God has created and use goods to express this love. The same thing is true of obedience; it has to be like Christ's obedience to the Heavenly Father for the sake of the salvation of all.

How does God work this salvation? He does it through us. We teach others by our way of living, by our works of charity, by our concern for the social welfare of all, by our efforts to build up our societies and nations so they embody a civilization of love. What we do should be seen to build up and ennoble human life and ways of living.

What not all see is that what makes all of this a reality is making our living together an instrument for sanctification. We are to seek to sanctify our families, our communities, our civic and social order, our country and the Church. To difficulties and crises, we must respond with the "calm of the Gospel". There will always be difficulties and opposition, both from the failures of Christians to live sanctification and from the hatred of those who misunderstand Christ's message of love.

Let opponents rage! Continue to bless the name of the Lord Jesus! Continue to imitate and bless the saints! To Jesus Christ be glory and honor and blessing! This is the message of St. Ignatius, and the message of the Gospel and of Jesus. Keep it in mind that when you sanctify your living and acting in the ways possible in your circumstances you are both an apologist and an apostle of Jesus Christ!

## **ABOVE ALL TRUST IN JESUS, OUR REDEEMER**

### **A reflection from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII**

**How can I speak to your heart? I want so much to speak from my heart to your heart. I want to speak about the Son of God who redeems us. The Son of God in the sacrament of Divine love has sanctified you. He has sanctified every human reality that you have and are. That includes your senses, the desires of your flesh, the sorrows that can't be avoided in any human life, and even your sometimes angry heart. Nothing can come between you and the love of God given us in Jesus Christ!**

**This was the message St. Paul repeated in his day and it is the message that St. Alphonsus Liguori repeated endlessly in his many ministries. God loves you and wants to show you the way to the Heavenly Kingdom. Have you resolved to follow Jesus? But do you find your resolutions waver. Turn to Jesus with trust. No, you don't know how long you still have to live. Don't be afraid but turn to Jesus. Whether the road you have to walk will be long or short you can be sure the eucharistic food will keep you good company on your way up the Lord's mountain.**

**We all know that there are many who fail to respond to the Lord's call, and so to the Lord's commands. Maybe they have ignored things like their Easter duty, which is only another call to come to the sacrament of Divine love. What message have we for such people? We can tell them from our own experience that they can always trust in Jesus. All of you, take courage!**

**That is what St. Alphonsus did. A principle reason for founding a new religious congregation was to bring this message to marginalized and neglected Christians. How easy it is to get lost, as we say, if no one brings you the message of God's love. But perhaps they confuse it and make it an endless effort to find just the right solution to every moral question. St. Alphonsus became a great moral theologian by bringing all a common-sense solution to such anxieties and showing that it was very sophisticated as well—helpful equally to the uneducated and the overeducated.**

**The doors of God's banqueting all are never closed. Every day is the right day to turn to God. The things we got never quite gave us satisfaction and peace. Today is the right day to turn to Jesus in trust and learn love—for self and for others—from the Master of Love. Jesus goes out to seek all those the Heavenly Father has called into existence. Jesus calls them into the Father's arms. What can be more wonderful than to find oneself in those arms! They are stretched out to you and me. Turn to God. Turn to Jesus today and find God and all you could long for of happiness and peace.**

# **THE JOURNEY TO CONTEMPLATION**

**A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini**

The desert is a place where, through trial and temptation, we are called to learn who God truly is. We belong to a pilgrim church, a church journeying through history, and through a particular culture and civilization, and so often confronted with difficulties. Surrounded as so many are by anonymous individuals, there can be something of the desert even within our society or community.

How does one live through such trials? One let's oneself be made aware of the presence of the Lord. The Lord's face has been shown us in Christ and in his trials in the desert. If we let ourselves see him now we open ourselves to his help as we struggle to face the trails of our version of the desert. We have to know that we actually live by every word that comes to us from the mouth of God, and of Jesus who shows us that God's face is the face of love.

Do you think of contemplating the face of God as a reward that is given only after one has finished the desert journey? If you think that way how do you explain the glow you see in the faces of many believers? Does this reveal to us the intense radiance of the Son as revealing his face to us? The Son reflects a Father, and in this case a Heavenly Father. We begin to see that face ourselves when we see it radiated in the faces of those Jesus has made true children of God, the One Heavenly Father. I believe it is almost impossible to live a Christian experience in today's society without being immersed, rooted, in deep contemplation. And this must be in a personal experience of contemplation. The desert we enter is our daily life as we seek to do what we find gives our life meaning. We must strive to find the moments, the pauses, that allow us to live in a listening dialogue with our God and with God alone.

When your countenance is radiant from contemplating the countenance of God people notice it. When we live a contemplative experience, we radiate God around us, even without wanting or trying to. This is one of the few and most important signs of the presence of God in today's world. The presence is revealed in those who have climbed the Mount of Contemplation in a desert.

The question to ask ourselves is what we need to do to open ourselves to this. I think it is the only way that the temptation of idolatry and even atheism can be conquered in our society. Perhaps we are among those who are overburdened with a thousand things to do, or perhaps we have overburdened ourselves in an effort to escape an emptiness within. We need to give place—to leave a place open—to the radiant presence of God and to the contemplation of God's face. Perhaps our inner emptiness was such a place and we have to cease running away in order to find God's face in ourselves and in others. Stop running and let yourself be alone with God in prayer. It is the door to contemplation.

# **GOD'S CALL TO US, EACH AND ALL**

**A reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman**

**Our Lord Jesus Christ, after dying for our sins on the cross and ascending on high, didn't leave the world as he found it. Jesus left a blessing behind him. He left in the world what before wasn't in it—a secret home for faith and love to enjoy. And this secret home is there for us in spite of the world around us.**

**What is this home? It is the Church of God, our true home provided by God. There God dwells with all the angels and saints and he introduces us into it by giving us a new birth. We can even enter into it in a way that enables us to forget the troubles of the world around us.**

**A foretaste was provided by the Jerusalem Temple. It rose stately & beautiful on Mount Zion. It invited worshipers and led them into an outer court and away from the outward world and into God's presence. But it was confined to one place and couldn't be a home for the whole world but only for a few at a time. Our Christian temple is spiritual and invisible and can be everywhere at once. It is wherever Christians are and are praying in Jesus' Name. All may enter it and be part of God's heavenly family in a way that is just as real as was the Jerusalem Temple when one entered it.**

**Yes, this temple is invisible but this is a necessary condition for its being everywhere. Listen to St. Paul: "You are come to Mount Zion and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant." So leave this earthly scene, Virgin Soul. No matter how attractive and winning you are aim at a higher prize, the noblest companionship.**

**We are able to enter into the tabernacle of God. Though we are in a fleshly body and a member of this world we have only to kneel reverently in prayer and we are at once in the society of the saints and angels. Wherever we are, we can, through God's incomprehensible mercy, in a moment bring ourselves into the midst of God's Holy Church invisible and receive secretly that aid the very thought of which is a present and perceivable blessing. Whatever may have been our past life, whether we have never trusted anyone wholly but God and God's sacred light has been with us, or whether we have trusted in the world and it has failed us, God's mercies in Christ are offered in full abundance.**

**Come, then, to God and ask for these mercies. Approach God as you are asked to do with all your heart and mind and strength. You will find God!**

## **WHAT LEADS PEOPLE TO CONVERSION?**

**A reflection taken from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII**

When we think or speak about St. John Vianney we immediately picture an extraordinarily saintly priest who for the love of God and the conversion of sinners, went without food and sleep, lived according to a harsh self-imposed discipline of life, and most of all practiced self-denial to a heroic degree. He was hard on himself but most gentle with others.

It is true that not all are asked to follow this way of life. Nevertheless, Divine Providence has seen to it that the Church is never short of persons, moved by the Holy Spirit, who have no hesitation about walking this road. It is people like this that, more than any others, work miracles of conversion. Conversions were the result of St. John Vianney's example of self-denial combined with gentleness to everyone.

One of the lessons we learn from St. John is that of the prime importance of the ascetic life. Notice the poverty of the Cure of Ars. He imitated St. Francis and was a faithful member of the Third Order of Franciscans. He had enough to give to others but was poor for himself. He lived in such total detachment from the good things of this world that his heart had perfect freedom to give generously to all those in material as well as spiritual need. They came in great numbers.

"My secret", he liked to say, "is very simple: Give all and hold nothing back." His disinterestedness made him deeply caring toward the poor, especially those of his own parish. He showed great tenderness in dealing with them. He treated them with "delicate tact and consideration, indeed he treated them with real respect". He liked to remind people that one must never treat the poor with disrespect because if we did we would be treating God with disrespect.

When beggars knocked at his door they were received with kindness. "I am as poor as you today; I am one of you"! That was what he often said. To the end of his life he loved to repeat: "I am very happy; I have given everything away and the Good God may call me whenever he wishes."

Does John Vianney give us an impossible example for us to imitate? We can't share his circumstances of life but we can share his love for God and for others. We can treat others with a respect and concern like his. How much we fast and what sorts of self-denial are not so important as the love and compassion he showed all he met. This played no small part in drawing people of every sort to him and to seek God through his ministry and prayers. If we show that we love God above and beyond all else then people know that God is with you. To whom would you go if you wanted to find the new life that God offers except to a person with whom God obviously dwells and who shows the face of God in the way he treats everyone? Let God's loving and merciful face shine out on your face.